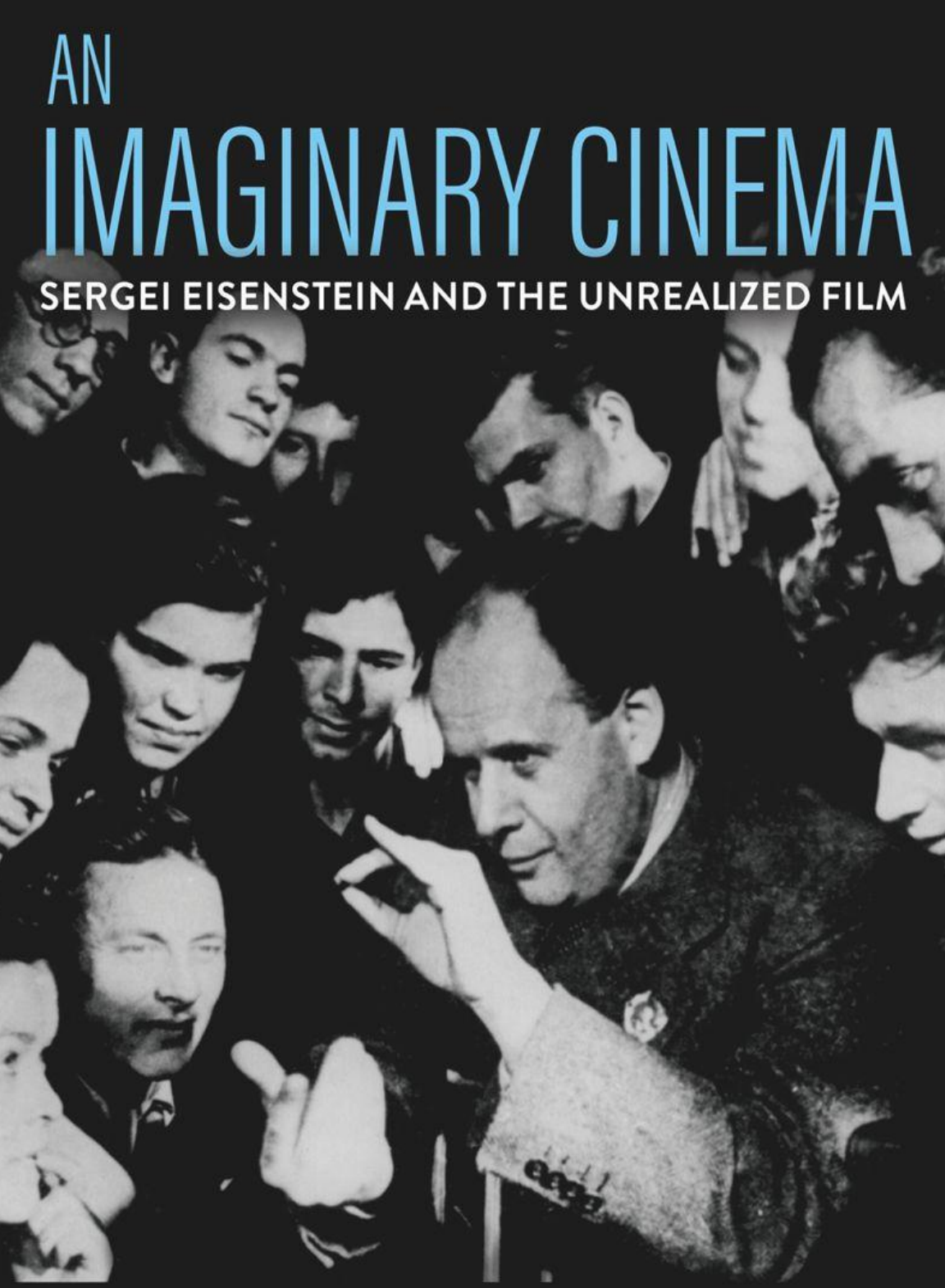
AN IMAGINARY CINEMA

SERGEI EISENSTEIN AND THE UNREALIZED FILM



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CORNELL UNIVERSITY PRESS
Ithaca and London

Publication of this book was made possible, in part, by a grant from the First Book Subvention Program of the Association for Slavic, East European, and Eurasian Studies.

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First published 2024 by Cornell University Press

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Names: Condren, Dustin, author.
Title: An imaginary cinema : Sergei Eisenstein and the unrealized film / Dustin Condren.
Description: Ithaca : Cornell University Press, 2024. | Includes bibliographical references and index.
Identifiers: LCCN 2024011168 (print) | LCCN 2024011169 (ebook) | ISBN 9781501778469 (hardcover) | ISBN 9781501778490 (epub) | ISBN 9781501778483 (pdf)
Subjects: LCSH: Eisenstein, Sergei, 1898-1948—Criticism and interpretation. | Unfinished films—Russia—History and criticism.
Classification: LCC PN1998.3.E34 C66 2024 (print) | LCC PN1998.3.E34 (ebook) | DDC 791.4302/33092—dc23/eng/20240318
LC record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2024011168
LC ebook record available at https://lccn.loc.gov/2024011169

Cover image: Sergei Eisenstein with VGIK students. Courtesy of Eisenstein Center, Moscow.

Je ne suis pas pour le fini. Je suis pour l'infini.
—Auguste Préault, *Medallion of Eugène Delacroix*, 1864

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Acknowledgments

I expect that the process of writing most any book is haunted to some degree by the thought that the author will lose inspiration, that the intended result will turn out to have been utterly unrealistic, that some unforeseen event might occur to bring the project to a halt, or that some important elusive thing (but what!?) will remain debilitatingly absent from its pages. In short, that the book will never be finished. Over the last several years, as I have researched and written a work that concerns itself with the phenomenon of incomplete projects, these very real fears have from time to time felt particularly acute, and of course acutely ironic. I have imagined other possible versions of the book: versions that are far more comprehensive or elaborated, versions that disappear down different archival trails and come up with other discoveries, versions that I will never write. Instead, what I have written is this book, which exists, and which has the appearance of something finished. The momentum that I relied on through the process of its writing was most often fueled by the palpable and contagious energy of the very creative process that is the book's subject: the cinematic imagination of Sergei Mikhailovich Eisenstein. I am endlessly grateful to him for the persistence and originality of his thought and practice, which continued despite repeated failure and real danger, and for the fact that, despite all, he succeeded in preserving his imaginary films the way that he did.

I have received generous support in my research and writing from the two institutions where I have composed the book; I am very grateful for funding and fellowships from the Stanford University Department of Slavic Languages and Literatures and its Center for Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies. At the University of Oklahoma, I have been fortunate to receive multiple junior faculty research fellowships as well as subvention funding from the Office of the Vice President for Research and Partnerships and the Office of the Provost. I would also like to express appreciation for access to the library facilities that I have

used, and which have made the settings of composition so pleasant: Cecil H. Green Library at Stanford University, the Russian State Library in Moscow, Sterling Memorial Library at Yale University, and Bizzell Memorial Library at the University of Oklahoma.

This book bears the imprint of the many people who have supported, facilitated, and encouraged me in its composition. I am grateful to Ekaterina Stenchikova and other members of the staff at the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art (RGALI) for making their resources as accessible and rewarding as they have been. Ivan Grek and Darya Herman and their colleagues at The Bridge Research have offered vital assistance in coordinating difficult long-distance archival transactions in the limiting context of Russia's war in Ukraine, and Svetlana Ishevska was indispensable as a research liaison in Moscow during the COVID-19 pandemic. I am very grateful to Mahinder Kingra at Cornell University Press for believing in the project and helping me to think through some perplexities of its structure, and also to the book's anonymous reviewers and the members of the editorial and faculty boards at Cornell University Press for their insightful comments. At the University of Oklahoma, I have been lucky to have the support of and feedback from thoughtful colleagues and wish to thank Emily D. Johnson and Matthew McGarry in particular. Conversations with Joanna Hearne, Joshua Nelson, and Man Fung Yip have also been very helpful. A number of friends have shared their insights large and small at various stages of this project, especially as I picked it up after a short break from active research: Tom Roberts, Martha Kelly, Natalie Rouland, and Molly Brunson all helped with this reentry. I am sincerely grateful to Steven S. Lee for your years of friendship and intellectual honesty; your lucid encouragement on one particular phone call in late 2015 made all the difference.

I have had the privilege these last years of interacting at conferences, seminars, online, and in person with many outstanding scholars in the field of Russian and Soviet cinema and within what we now call the Eisenstein International Network. The benefit I have drawn from these relationships is immense, and I wish to thank Luka Arsenjuk, Birgit Beumers, Evgenii Bershtein, Maria Belodubrovskaya, Vincent Bohlinger, Robert Bird, Ian Christie, Helen Grace, Dietmar Hochmuth, Felix Lenz, Anne Eakin Moss, Ana Hedberg Olenina, Vera Rumyantseva, Yuri Tsivian, Julia Vassilieva, Elena Vogman, and Michael Wedel for ideas shared in formal discussion or in personal conversation about my project and our common subject of study; in some cases, I give additional thanks

for the invitation to publish my work with you. I owe separate thanks to two people in the world of Eisenstein studies, for the instrumentality of their help at crucial stages: to Michael Kunichika for listening to me over lunch in New Jersey when my ideas were just forming and to Joan Neuberger for reading with profound synthesis as the project came to a close.

I am grateful to two of my earliest readers and responders, Branislav Jakovljević and Karla Oeler, for reflecting my ideas and arguments back to me in a way that sharpened and enhanced them but still left them feeling fully my own. And to two other readers, each of whom has known me and believed in me since I was more or less a youth, Monika Greenleaf and Gabriella Safran. Thank you each for teaching me to write better, with the twin values of clarity and beauty always in mind, and for keeping the doors of the department open while I was away.

Nariman Skakov: you were an outstanding mentor, and an even better friend and colleague. You have seen this work move from a vague idea to what it is now, and your involvement has been indispensable along the whole path. For your intelligence, your discipline and commitment, and your warmth, thank you. Here's to many more years of cooperation.

Everyone who works on Eisenstein knows that our field has been indelibly shaped over the last fifty years and more by Naum Kleiman. Like so many others before me, I have had the unbelievable good luck to stumble into an informal mentorship and friendship with him. For me this happened while doing archival research in Moscow in 2017. Naum Ikhilievich's exceptionally community-minded vision of knowledge and his belief in younger scholars has been essential for the recent blossoming of Eisenstein studies; I am among the many to have felt vitalized and affirmed by him in my work. He is quick with an email answer, generous with a document, and overwhelmingly sincere with his interest in the lives and ideas of others. If not for his help, this book would be far, far less than it is.

My first real exposure to Eisenstein was in a graduate seminar at Stanford many years ago. It was, to that point, the most challenging course I had ever taken, and it was taught with remarkable mystery and insight by Oksana Bulgakowa. Since then, apart from the unforgettable hours I spent in her classrooms, I have had the privilege of working with Oksana in many contexts, but none so meaningful as our collaborations on two large English-language editions of Eisenstein's theory. I am so grateful that she entrusted me with these translations—had

I not had the excuse to spend so much quiet, engrossing, and perplexing time with his thoughts, the ideas behind this project would most certainly never have occurred to me. My deepest gratitude to you, Oksana, for your guidance, for your real knowledge of me—which I have always felt—and for your friendship.

And to my two beautiful children who will maybe someday thumb through this book: Theodore October, your annunciation in this world came unexpectedly, in Moscow, the day before I was to begin my archival research for this project; you have taught me to trust such interruptions, and you've inspired me with your vision and bright imagination ever since. And Roswitha Winter, you have arrived just in time to see me finishing the book and sending it into the world; I will always remember the lightness and euphoria you brought to these final demanding months. And, most important, to Rachel Julia Engler, my partner in all. I know that realizing a project requires inspiration, labor, luck, and much else—but constant love and support make all that so much simpler. Your ability as a reader and writer, your editorial discernment, and your abiding collaboration have inestimably elevated both the book and our life together.

Note on Transliteration and Translation

I follow the Library of Congress system for transliteration from Russian but make liberal exceptions in the text for names and titles that have previously been given commonly accepted anglicized forms. In the text of the book then, I use spellings such as Grigori Alexandrov, Isaac Babel, Sergei Yutkevich, or Mosfilm; in transliterated citations in the bibliography and notes, they appear as Grigorii Aleksandrov, Isaac Babel', Sergei Iutkevich, and Mosfil'm. In the bibliography and notes, the form of the author's name will follow the language of publication, except in cases where, for the sake of coherence, an author of numerous works appearing in more than one language are consolidated under a well-known English form (Bulgakowa, Eisenstein, Marx, Shklovsky, etc.).

Where possible and profitable, I use and cite broadly available English translations of Russian sources. All uncredited translations of original Russian texts and documents are my own.

Abbreviations and Terms

GRK (Glavrepertkom)	Main Repertory Commission
GUKF	Main Directorate of the Cinema and Photo Industry
IP	S. M. Eizenshtein, *Izbrannye proizvedeniia v shesti tomakh*, 6 vols. (Moscow: Iskusstvo, 1964)
MoMA	Museum of Modern Art, New York
RGALI	Russian State Archive of Literature and Art
SW	Sergei Eisenstein, *Selected Works*
VGIK	All-Union State Institute of Cinematography

Archival sources from MoMA's Sergei Eisenstein Collection are cited according to the abbreviated alphanumeric format [series letter.folder number], page number. Thus a quotation from series D, folder 8, will produce the following citation: Eisenstein [D.8]. MoMA Archives, New York.

Archival sources from RGALI are cited according to the abbreviated numerical format *fond* (collection) number–*opis* (register) number, *delo* (file) number, *list* (page) number.

Thus, a quotation from *fond* 1923, *opis* 2, *delo* 1104, *list* 46 will produce the following citation: RGALI 1923-2-1104, 46.

AN IMAGINARY CINEMA

Introduction

Dangling over the Abyss

Several years ago, I translated into English some of the late, unpublished writings of Soviet film director Sergei Eisenstein. The text—a turbulent assemblage of theoretical exploration, aesthetic analysis, memoir, polemic, and more—was mostly written by Eisenstein during the last few years of his life, primarily in the 1940s. Like many of his generation, the director met with death tragically early; for him it came just a few weeks after his fiftieth birthday, the result of a bad heart that had suffered one too many traumas. Because of their author's early end, these late writings seem to carry the tone of a precipitous testament, a desire to get down on paper as many important thoughts as possible before death's lasting interruption. One biographical passage of these writings, in which the director wryly recalls a public speech he delivered in early 1935 and the "fatal catastrophe" of his mind going blank in the middle of it, an impressionistic and emotional description of being completely tongue-tied, stood out to me then as particularly moving. Since my first encounter with this scene, and particularly as I have written this book, the picture Eisenstein conjures of that moment at the podium, one he felt to be truly terrifying, has come into much sharper focus. As a particular instance of an artist trapped in the loop of his own expressive impulses, it is an emblematic story. And, as a generalized metaphor for

Eisenstein's own creative biography, the story's telling is perhaps its most eloquent feature.

Here is how we might recreate the scene: A typically cold Leningrad, 3 February 1935. The audience that fills the auditorium of the former Mariinsky Theatre, gathered to celebrate recent successes in Soviet film, waits in expectation as filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein steps to the podium. At the microphone he appears stout, pale, balding. His heavy brow, high forehead, and general ponderousness give him the look of someone remarkably older than his thirty-seven years. By all accounts, he is a man of great confidence, but this confidence must reside somewhere deep within him, alongside his creative instincts; everything external to this appears tentative, evasive, inscrutable. He is the most internationally famous of all Russian film directors, with acclaim trailing the series of successful films he made in his twenties. But time has passed quickly since, and he has not released a film for six years—a glaring and painful creative silence.

On this night of ceremony, the director has intentionally not brought notes with him. At first reluctant to accept the invitation to speak (for reasons we will soon understand) and then wary of his tendency to wax long and academic, he has chosen to limit himself by memorizing a brief address. He looks out toward his audience and above it. Colors and shapes populate his view, nothing distinct, a vague sense of the crowd. He focuses on the light blue and silver décor of the famous imperial theater. He begins to speak, and he makes a more or less auspicious start. Words follow one another, the audience is with him, and the speech gains momentum—but, at a certain point, quite suddenly, he loses the thread. The speech he had memorized has vanished from his mind. He is stuck:

> I am standing there, gently shaking. I am silent. The hall is silent. I am shaking. I am silent. And all is silent. The acceptable length for a pause passes. I am silent. And the audience begins to cough a little. The dusty candelabras sparkle like stars. In my head, various extraneous thoughts stroll about, lazily. And I stand there, silent. I look around askance, afraid to turn my head. And I am shaking all over. I angle my eyes sideways just like a horse. . . . Nowhere to turn for help. . . . I stand there as if at the gallows. It is impossible to describe this state. Exactly as though you were dangling over an abyss. And it occurs to you that this is the very thing you have always been deathly afraid of.[1]

This image, of the body dangling over an abyss, occurs often in Eisenstein's writings, just as it does in his films. Here, the suspended figure appears in the form of a disoriented orator—the filmmaker himself—suffering from an onstage memory lapse, unable to bring his utterance to a successful conclusion.

For us, at the beginning of this book about the unrealized film, let the image also stand for the experience of incompletion: the body, having definitively abandoned its point of departure, having taken initial steps, having laid some groundwork for an ultimate task, is now stranded hopelessly far from its intended destination. In the chapters that follow, we will see repeatedly how this phenomenon occurs, and frequently, in the process of filmmaking—and how, in the case of a filmmaker like Eisenstein, the phenomenon of the unrealized appears as an integral part of a creative oeuvre. How are we to understand such unfinished work in cinema? What are the factors, both internal and external, that cause such incompletion? Why are some artists so prone to such a surplus of unrealized projects? And what can be done with the traces of these films that never quite become *films*?

Eisenstein's working biography is rife with unfinished projects of every type (films, books, theater productions, and so on) and his truncated life is perhaps the starkest emblem of this. But if we return to the case of his speech in February 1935, onstage at the Mariinsky, the peril of permanent miscarriage lasts only a moment: through a timely mnemonic, Eisenstein succeeds in saving himself. He mentally retraces his steps backward, reconnects to the train of his thoughts, and somehow completes his speech without betraying the momentary inner crisis he had experienced.

Yet the poignancy of this recollection is not rooted in Eisenstein's near stumble alone but in the way that, a decade later, writing during a break in production for *Ivan the Terrible*, he highlights its connection to a far more terrifying manifestation of the unfinished. After describing the lucky resolution of his oratorical predicament, the director laments the fact that it was in this same speech that he had announced his plans to begin production on what was to be his next film project, *Bezhin Meadow*. This seemingly impromptu declaration was met with great enthusiasm in the auditorium, and one can readily picture Eisenstein's relief, as he imagines himself safely across the abyss, exultantly explaining how his new film would "mobilize all [his crew's] powers toward the building of socialism."[2] Indeed, the new film was promising—its premise a true tale of contemporary Soviet heroism filtered through

imagery from a classic Ivan Turgenev story—and the project had been carefully selected as an opportunity for the director to work in the newly requisite socialist realist style. But over the next two years, his attempts to complete the film would send Eisenstein on a near-fatal journey. As we will see in the conclusion of this book, *Bezhin Meadow* would be the vehicle that ran him definitively afoul of Soviet film leadership, exposing him to unbearable levels of scrutiny and criticism; arrests—and some executions—seethe around the project, its crew, and studio managers. Somehow, fortunately, Eisenstein emerged alive from the spoiled production—but just barely, and with yet another unrealized film to add to an already long list.

Eisenstein recalls his ill-starred announcement of *Bezhin Meadow* with a remorse that approaches the mystical: "I am very superstitious. But to my regret, not quite enough. . . . If I were more superstitious, such a fiasco [of memorization] during a speech would have held me back from the fateful step of attempting to make this picture."[3] The director had now publicly committed himself to production and would spend vital years of life working toward a passable final picture but, having devoted himself to this goal, he could not make his way to its end.

Again, the abyss is yawning, and Eisenstein dangles over it.

"If I Knew as Much as Eisenstein . . ."

Even in the face of calamity, Eisenstein seems always to have relied on a healthy irony. When recollecting the details of his unfortunate speech of February 1935, he diminishes the real terror and regret he clearly felt, with a petulant quip: "I have a horrible dislike for public speaking. Especially at celebratory proceedings."[4] The aversion to oratory he describes is more unambiguous if we consider that only one month before the vertiginous February speech he described so potently, he had delivered a speech at another gathering for Soviet cinema, also markedly "celebratory," and that this earlier occasion had ended far from innocuously.

In January 1935, this time on a stage in Moscow's Central House of Cinema, the director had stood to speak before an even more imposing audience: a hall full of the nation's top film directors, screenwriters, camera operators, actors, and state production officials—right up to the highest levels: hundreds of them, waiting for Eisenstein to wrap up a serpentine and overlong speech. This was the All-Union Creative Conference of Soviet Cinema Workers, the first of its kind, a remarkable

event in the history of Soviet film, held over the course of six days. The conference was convened as part of the official nationwide commemoration of the fifteenth anniversary of the nation's film industry—there were to be several weeks of meetings, screenings, awards ceremonies (such as the one described above), even the inauguration of an international film festival. All this was punctuated by the publication in the major Soviet newspapers of a greeting from Joseph Stalin and the Central Committee to all Soviet film workers, commissioning them to make more films that would "glorify" the Soviet past and "mobilize" viewers toward the tasks of the socialist future.[5] Such directives from above provided a pretext for the Soviet film industry to engage in public self-correction, continue the process of purging its nonparty elements, and consciously consolidate itself under the aesthetic principles of socialist realism. This was manifestly the climate of the All-Union Conference, where Eisenstein was to deliver one of the keynote speeches.

Figure 1.1. Eisenstein speaking in January 1935 at the All-Union Creative Conference of Soviet Cinema Workers. Associated Press. Used with permission.

The transcribed text of Eisenstein's broad-ranging address is one of the primary sources documenting the evolution of the director's expansive analytical and creative imagination. He speaks at length and with flair on the power of synecdoche, details of the form-content relationship, the origins of the detective novel, the phenomenon of sensual thinking and its relevance for the production and reception of art. He analyzes literary and scientific texts from Nikolai Gogol to Friedrich Engels, cites ethnographic examples from the peoples of Polynesia and the Amazonian rainforests, even quotes an entire paragraph from Wilhelm Wundt's *Elemente der Völkerpsychologie* (1912), and along with all this he provides a complex, quasi-Hegelian interpretation of Soviet film's development up to 1935. A compelling and dense theoretical statement, but, considering the circumstances, shockingly esoteric, avoiding practical or doctrinal direction, and absent any acknowledgment of the political stakes of the occasion. For his audience at the time, gathered to establish an orthodox collective identity as revolutionary filmmakers, Eisenstein's talk could have come across only as baffling, alienating, even tone-deaf.

And so it did. Throughout the remaining days of the conference, as a response to this speech and despite his status as the appointed chair of the proceedings, Eisenstein was made to endure a persistent stream of peer criticism, as filmmaking colleague after colleague took the stand to, among other important things, admonish the famous man for his failures as a thinker—so evident to them from his speech—and for his failures as a filmmaker, the most damnable of which was his glaring lack of recent output. In nearly all the criticisms of Eisenstein, his fellow filmmakers thematized the antithetical energies of theory and practice. Vsevolod Pudovkin was among the gentlest, complimenting the director for his past success, while reminding him not to get lost in the darkness of his "galaxy" of thought.[6] Others were more direct: in his speech, Sergei Yutkevich called Eisenstein "a brilliant master but a frequently mistaken theorist" and expressed a general "anxiety" for Eisenstein's "fate," implying that he ought not "sink his teeth into [questions of] form" but, rather "sink his teeth into life, into reality."[7] Leonid Trauberg, after critiquing some aspects of Eisenstein's *October* (1928) and relegating such early works to "a museum of wax figures," went as far as to suggest that Eisenstein's recent tendency to keep quiet (creatively, politically) was "a crime."[8]

Between the lines of these statements by Eisenstein's peers, we may read the rash spirit of self-preservation that emerges in times

of mounting totalitarianism. Dressed as they were in a dull sense of danger, these criticisms demonstrate how tenuous Eisenstein's position had become in the Soviet film firmament and suggest that what his audience and fellow filmmakers required from him now was actual, tangible *cinema* and not more abstruse *thought*. This is a sentiment that can be seen to culminate uncomfortably in some otherwise good-natured remarks by Alexander Dovzhenko. Like the other speakers, Dovzhenko expressed the idea that, for him, Eisenstein's films were "ten times more valuable than [his] theory," but he went further, saying that, in his opinion, it was Eisenstein's "very erudition that [was] burying [*grobit*] him." Dovzhenko seems to have thought better of using such an explicitly fatal metaphor, quickly correcting himself: "No, I'm sorry, that's not the word, better to say it is *disorganizing* him."[9] The inherent connection that Dovzhenko insinuates between knowledge and death—figurative or literal—nevertheless turns out to be hard to suppress here: at an earlier point in his speech, he had joked, "When I listen to Eisenstein's speech, I fear that he knows so much . . . that he'll never make another picture. If I knew as much [as Eisenstein], I would die!" The transcript of Dovzhenko's talk records the roar of laughter that followed the statement. But surely the terror underlying this triangulation—of a theory and practice conditioned by death—could not have gone fully unfelt either by the speaker or his addressee, especially amid the escalation of party purges and arrests at exactly this time.[10]

Tellingly, however, the criticism that seemed to have most upset Eisenstein was delivered by Sergei Vasiliev, the codirector of *Chapaev*, 1934's resounding cinematic success and the consensus model for the new socialist realist style. Vasiliev imagined with clear sarcasm an ivory-tower Eisenstein, "occupied with [his] scientific-theoretical work in his office, sitting surrounded by books, magnificent statuettes, all sorts of other wonderful things, wrapped up in [his] splendid robe covered in Chinese hieroglyphics." With this image, the younger director pivots to a direct censure of Eisenstein, saying "all of this is done in isolation from practice. . . . Until you decide to wade into the thick of our reality . . . in your office you will never be able to create anything that is of full value."[11]

As is customary on such occasions, the nominal chair of the proceedings has the final word, and so, on 13 January, the final day of the conference, despite the disapproval that had dogged him the preceding days, Eisenstein offered his closing remarks. His tone had changed; in this address, he is both circumspect in his thematic scope and insistent

in defense of his cinematic activities. He responds to those suggesting the incompatibility of the theoretical and the practical and argues instead for the necessity of their yoking together: "I consider it necessary to make films, and I will make films, *but I believe that this work should be conducted parallel to similarly intense theoretical work and theoretical research*."[12] For Eisenstein, then, the strain between theory and practice need not, as his critics believed, indicate a mutual exclusivity; theory and practice were, instead, two parts of a binary that may be seen as the necessary condition propelling the forward motion of his work.

Perhaps the most fascinating passage of this speech, also addressed to the question of thought divorced from work, comes in his rebuttal of Sergei Vasiliev and the latter's admonition to reenter "reality": "This conversation about the 'ivory tower' is nothing new. But if we're going to talk in terms of ivory, then allow me to take up residence not in a tower, but instead imagine that I am living in a tusk—one that is necessary to batter through the concepts that occur in cinema. And if, in these last few years, I have perhaps worked more with only the one tusk—the theoretical and academic . . . then from this moment forward I will be engaged in work with two tusks—both production and theory."[13]

This strange, elephantine image (picture Eisenstein inside a tusk—and then, inside two!) highlights for us the difficulty that the director felt in responding to the concept, proposed by his fellow filmmakers, that the *imagination* of cinema was somehow an endeavor separate from the *making* of cinema.

The director's dramatic promise to reyoke his theoretical work to production, after his extended period without a new film, should be read against a passage from his speech that began the conference, and in which he had alluded to his relatively silent years since the premieres of *October* and *The Old and the New*. He characterizes this period, however, as full of a different sort of practical but invisible labor: "a considerable and rather serious creative work was underway, and it was creative work, moreover, that, unfortunately, nobody was able to see and that has to be taken on trust."[14] This creative work [*tvorcheskaia rabota*: creative, constructive, artistic labor] represents production-oriented activity for which the filmmaker has nothing to show, literally *unseen* work that crystallizes Eisenstein's dilemma between the work of the mind and the onscreen work of cinema; it is a space somewhere between the strictly theoretical and the tangibility of proper film production. This unseen creative work, of course, refers to the series of unrealized

projects that he developed between the late 1920s and mid-1930s—a flow of fascinating film ideas, some of which occupied him briefly, others of which were sustained and all-consuming, but none of which were completed. In the first speech, he had taken the risk of referring specifically to films he had attempted to make with Paramount Pictures in Hollywood (*Sutter's Gold* and *An American Tragedy*, both 1930), to his incomplete Mexican picture over which he struggled between 1930 and 1932, as well as to his ongoing development of a film called *Black Majesty* about the Haitian revolution. And there had been many other remarkable unrealized projects besides.

In other words, even before he had received such heavy criticism from his peers, Eisenstein had suggested that for the previous five or six years, far from locking himself in among the arcana of his office, he *had been* working practically, toward production, and emphatically so—but how can one show films that exist only in the mind, in notebooks, on sketchpads? And then, how does one speak of work that one cannot show? A nearly unanswerable question, and in a medium for which *showing* is the great determinant, even more so. The most effective way of making this unseen labor useful would seem to be by routing the experience of it into future labor, be it theoretical or practical. For Eisenstein, the two branches inevitably merge into one another—for better or worse. As he would write in 1937 about theory and practice, "I don't know which is more useful. But, so far, the cross I have often borne is that questions of creative production overgrow into the realm of scientific analysis."[15]

A Third Tusk

A vision of the filmmaker stretched across the gulf separating two related but distinct domains of cinematic activity—that between theory and practice—has come to serve as the generally accepted image of Eisenstein, one regularly reinforced by film historian and layperson alike since the 1930s.[16] This double reputation rests as prominently on a series of landmark pictures as it does on a corpus of published and unpublished theoretical writing on cinema. Thus Eisenstein occupies a position that is remarkable in film history—his twin ivory "tusks" of practice and theory have indeed come to comprise a body of work that provides endless possibilities for emulation by filmmakers and research by scholars from a growing multitude of disciplines the world over.[17] But, despite the balance implied by Eisenstein's ivory metaphor

(each tusk supporting, not sapping, the efforts of the other), an unmistakable signal resounds in its delivery, a wry discomfort over what this binary arrangement omits of the filmmaker's cinematic labor. In the formal irony of this ivory imagery, we encounter the limitations of duality: what of the work that falls between the two tusks, which appears neither as theory nor as visible practice, work that occupies the uncharted expanse between the writing desk and the screen itself?

We have seen Eisenstein attempt to convince his cinema colleagues of the value of this type of labor, expended throughout his career and particularly at key points, labor that would have to be taken on trust, that was invisible, imaginary: those unfinished and unviewable works of cinema that the director conceived, labored over, and guided to various degrees of development before setting them aside, for any number of reasons, willingly or unwillingly, to remain forever incomplete. Of course, Eisenstein is hardly the only filmmaker whose legacy is complicated by a series of unmade projects, even among, or perhaps especially among, his Soviet contemporaries.[18] To that end, as will be discussed later in this book, the unrealized film is as much a general symptom of filmmaking as is the fully produced film. But what makes Eisenstein's body of unrealized films particularly compelling is the way that it interacts with his theoretical and practical work as a sort of intangible third tusk, an additional domain in which the dialectics of film form may be pursued and applied.

Among Eisenstein's unrealized films are projects representing a wide spectrum of development, each of which has left hugely different archival material traces. The range includes films that were written, planned, and shot (to some degree of completion) but never edited into authoritative final versions, such as *¡Que viva México!* (1931–32) or the aforementioned *Bezhin Meadow* (1935–37); films that were developed into fully articulated screenplays, oriented toward practical production, but for which the cameras never actually rolled, such as *Sutter's Gold* (1930) or *MMM* (1932–33); film ideas that were highly developed in notes, diary entries, drawings, and script fragments, but without any proper screenplay to speak of, such as *Glass House* (1928–30) or *Moscow* (1933, 1946); and, finally, film ideas that at some point lingered on Eisenstein's work desk, whether originating in his own fantasy or someone else's, but which left very little trace of real development, such as *Dzhungo* (1926) or *La condition humaine* (1934–35). This last category, which Eisenstein conceptualized in the early 1930s as "a series of brilliant meteors, . . . of which there have been not a few,"[19] is interesting

primarily for its breadth, a horizontal index of the director's expansive interests and a suggestion of what might have been, had opportunity and energy aligned differently.

Clearly, Eisenstein's entire oeuvre may be seen as rife with the unrealized, though certain periods reflect more fragmentation and abbreviation than others. As if to further complicate our conceptions of wholeness and completion in cinema, even within the corpus of the director's completed works, there is an implied presence of the unfinished. As Naum Kleiman has emphasized, even works assumed to be complete, films like *Strike*, *Battleship Potemkin*, and *October*, are to some extent fragments of more grandly conceived projects that remained incomplete—*Strike* was to have been one part of a twelve-installment series titled *Toward the Dictatorship*, the larger setting of *Potemkin* was to have been the broad revolutionary panorama of *The Year 1905*, and *October* was meant to have been a two-part sequence of which the existing film is only the first half.[20] On the other chronological end of the oeuvre is the *Ivan* trilogy, which must inevitably be seen as incomplete—as just two of its three planned installments were filmed and only the first was given an authoritative final cut—and which, as both Yuri Tsivian and Joan Neuberger have shown, benefits from being analyzed as a work in progress, the object of interest being, as Tsivian says, "not so much the film *per se*, but the film in the making, its evolution from scrawl to screen, as it were."[21]

In the early 1990s, the American film critic Annette Michelson articulated the importance of incorporating an understanding of this nebulous body of unfinished work into any analysis of Eisenstein as a filmmaker: "Eisenstein's production forms, as we know, a field of theory and practice, and as such it must be studied. . . . This field, however, demands, for a fuller understanding, the acknowledgment of an important set of structural axes and determinants: that of presence and absence, of work completed (and therefore available for analysis) and that of work conceived, planned, and elaborated but unrealized, unavailable, yet unavoidably soliciting inquiry."[22] Despite Michelson's call, and perhaps because this task of "acknowledgment" is so considerable—a list of titles for Eisenstein's unrealized (or barely begun) projects now appears to number around thirty—concentrated analysis of these films is still relatively sparse.

Since the 1970s, and particularly in the last three decades, as access to Russian state archives has opened to researchers, the available material connected to Eisenstein and the production operations of

the Soviet film industry has multiplied, significantly increasing our knowledge of this shadowy region of Eisenstein studies. Thus, the body of scholarship that considers Eisenstein's unrealized films has been steadily growing. Such scholarly work on Eisenstein's unfinished film projects might be sorted provisionally into four categories—each, in its way, a mode of reclaiming this unviewable cinematic labor. They are as follows:

Reproductions of Eisenstein's notes and script materials for unrealized projects. This includes the publication in Soviet film journals—mostly in the 1970s—of several of the major incomplete works, as edited by Leonid Kozlov, Naum Kleiman, and others.[23] Into this group fall subsequent translations of the same materials into various languages (English, French, German).[24] Across languages, such publications, as a rule, have included annotations and essays to frame the projects they present.

Scholarly articles or book chapters that address and historicize individual unfinished projects. This also includes articles or chapters that make extended reference to one of these projects in pursuit of larger historical or aesthetic questions. The long list of such scholarship grows constantly, but Annette Michelson's landmark 1976 two-part essay on Eisenstein's proposed adaptation of Karl Marx's *Capital*, Mikhail Iampolski's 1988 essay on the meaning of glass in modern Europe (which begins and ends with Eisenstein's plans for a film called *Glass House*), Katerina Clark's 2006 article "Eisenstein's Two Projects for a Film about Moscow," and Edward Tyerman's treatment of the Tretiakov-Eisenstein collaboration *Dzhungo* in his 2021 *Internationalist Aesthetics: China and Early Soviet Culture* are all prime examples of such research.[25]

Sustained, book-length engagements with unfinished projects. Masha Salazkina's 2009 monograph, *In Excess: Sergei Eisenstein's Mexico*, which analyzes Eisenstein's never-finished *¡Que viva México!* is an exquisite example of one. Elena Vogman's *Dance of Values* (2019), another example, is an archival investigation and theoretical analysis of Eisenstein's *Capital* project.[26] Such in-depth studies are considerably rarer.

Material related to Eisenstein's unrealized films as found in other presentational media. This category includes exhibitions, catalogs, and filmic reconstructions. Examples may be found in the Museum of Modern Art's many public presentations of various edits of *¡Que viva México!*, catalogs such as Jay Leyda and Zina Voynov's 1982 *Eisenstein at Work*, and the 1968 still-frame reconstruction of *Bezhin Meadow* as produced by Naum Kleiman and Sergei Yutkevich.

The vast body of Eisenstein's work, itself gesturing so often toward the unrealized in several categories (the fleeting idea, the partially prepared sketch, the nearly finished essay, the nominally finished work that indicates a larger incomplete whole) offer discrete points of entry, at different angles, into Eisenstein's artistic process, where the very unfinished nature of the projects makes possible the observation of an idea's coming into being. For those familiar with Eisenstein, these projects also function as an occasion to enlarge understandings of already prominent (and prominently discussed) characteristics of Eisenstein's artistic and theoretical body of work: questions of movement, of pathos, of montage, and so on. From yet another perspective, these projects also provide insight into some of the more mysterious areas of Eisenstein's aesthetic and intellectual evolution; they help navigate the many inevitable ruptures in our understanding of the artist and his legacy—some as significant as the divergence, often remarked on, between the avant-garde early-period Eisenstein of *Potemkin* and the organic and classical values in the late-period Eisenstein of *Ivan the Terrible*. And, perhaps most important, when seen broadly, as prime instances of cinema that has yet to become cinema, these projects supply the film scholar with a mass of opportunities to comprehend more closely the common yet altogether underinterpreted phenomenon of the unrealized work of cinema and its relationship to the fully produced film.

The Swarm of Unrealized Projects

My intention in this book is to explore, within the Eisenstein oeuvre, the unrealized work as such—and not only to propose readings of specific archival objects, but also to contend with the question of how to engage that peculiar brand of cinematic artifact that, though oriented toward and determined by the intention for ultimate exhibition as an intact and fully articulated work of cinema, can only be studied or accessed as incomplete, lacking the basic and verifiable form of the medium, a text *in potentia*. Moreover, the intention is to frame these unfinished works *together*, as a series, and as a comprehensive body. Those who have analyzed pieces of this material previously have for the most part approached the projects for their discrete features; my focus on the integral value of the unrealized as *a coherent genre of work within the Eisenstein oeuvre* is what I believe to be this study's most substantial contribution. In keeping with Viktor Shklovsky, who, while making a brief analysis of one of Eisenstein's unmade films in his 1976 monograph

on the director, wrote, "But what can one judge of the fates of children that were never born. For them, there is no horoscope,"[27] I exclude from my analysis any speculation on the artistic, critical, or commercial "fates" these projects might have experienced, had they been made into completed films. Instead, I approach these projects as objects unto themselves, suspending, to the extent possible, the telic burden of an intended final, projected film, as well as any musing on the likelihood of directorial success and impact on eventual audiences. With this approach, the aura of absence that surrounds the unfinished (that a project may lack a completed script, director's plans, filmed footage, et cetera) becomes a marker of potential energy, of freedom from practical restriction, the sign of the creative process's multiplicities of possibility.

In 1944, Eisenstein described his incomplete works as a "swarm of unrealized projects."[28] And indeed, organizing this swarm is a daunting first step in making any analysis of them—by nature they are protean and textually elusive; they resist organization. In a modest attempt at finitude, however, I have selected seven constituents of this swarm as the primary objects of my study (though I will discuss details from many other unfinished Eisenstein projects besides). These seven main unrealized films and my readings of them are in no way meant to suggest a qualitative hierarchy among the films in either his complete or his incomplete oeuvre. My aim has been rather to pursue the parts that speak most faithfully for the whole, to arrange a sequence that will not only allow for the clearest analysis of the specifics of the various unfinished works in the director's archive but also allow for the most productive reading of the significance of the unfinished within his full body of work. In order to do this, I have instituted some limits.

The first is to set chronological brackets: this book's seven primary film projects were all developed and abandoned in the decade between 1927 and 1937. As a series, not only do these seven projects frame the most exasperating period of Eisenstein's working biography, but they are also situated exactly within a time of utmost historical crisis in the Soviet Union—roughly from the time of Stalin's rise to power through the Great Terror. Emma Widdis writes of the decade (particularly its first six years) that it is "often described as a transitional period in Soviet cultural history: the end of the avant-garde and the New Economic Policy years, the institution and completion of the First Five-Year Plan, and the gradual move towards the cultural hegemonies that were formalized in 1934 as socialist realism."[29] Although this paradigm, as Widdis subsequently suggests, can be complicated historically in a number

of ways, it is a useful structure through which to view certain shifts. As this relates to Soviet film history, Richard Taylor views the 1928 First All-Union Party Conference on the Cinema, when central control was finally exercised over all film production, as the decisive moment that "marks the end of the period of experimentation and spontaneous revolutionary enthusiasm for which the Soviet cinema of the 1920s is justly famous."[30] Eisenstein's most compelling unrealized projects begin to emerge at this time. Though one might be tempted to assume a direct causality between the cultural changes of the time and Eisenstein's failure to finish projects—since, to some extent, the complex and constant formations and reformulations of popular ideology seem often to have contributed to the need for him to shift creative directions—I am more interested in this historical frame as a background against which to observe Eisenstein, already prone to the unfinished, imagining new and complicated film ideas and formal techniques in the hope of mediating cinema's relationship with the turbulent political and social reality in which he worked.

The second limit I impose is that I proceed with a slight modification to Yuri Tsivian's dictum on *Ivan the Terrible* (cited earlier) to follow the film's "evolution from scrawl to screen." For these unrealized works, evolution need not necessarily lead to a screen, but rather more often from scrawl to further scrawl, from scrawl to sketch, or from scrawl to script, as the case may be. In fact, for the film projects that I focus on in this book, we have no moving screen image to study whatsoever—production, for all of them, never advanced beyond the development phase to principal photography. This approach will allow me to read their archival remnants specifically as examples of cinema-imaginative *technique* rather than as artifacts of actual (though unsuccessful) film *objects*, a distinction for which I lay the groundwork in chapter 1. There is one slight exception to this rule, and it is a brief departure that comes under a different frame: in the conclusion, I consider *Bezhin Meadow*, a project for which a great deal of film footage once existed. This footage, however, was entirely destroyed, giving rise to a case in which the tragic lack of formerly extant film is what propels us to the unrealized.

Finally, I have chosen basic montage—the incitement of analysis through proximity and collision—as the third limiting principle that organizes this book and its sections. Between its introduction and conclusion, the book is arranged into parts and chapters. The three parts include two chapters each, and each chapter is devoted to one of Eisenstein's unrealized projects. In all three cases, the two yoked projects are

entirely distinct, though chronologically contiguous and thematically linked. The six main studies of unrealized projects arranged thus fall into three productive combinations in which I consider the conceptual origins, practical aspirations, and ultimate dissolutions of the projects. Moreover, in the introductory text to each part, I present what we might call an Eisensteinian conceptual opposition through which I propose reading the two chapters of that part. For example, in part I, the title "Ideal/Material" suggests a rhetorical field in which to view the two unrealized projects that it addresses in its chapters. This structure not only provides space for fruitful investigations of the unrealized projects' distinct properties but also gives rein to the impulse to study Eisenstein's unrealized films as such, probing the ways in which correlations between projects reveal the broader thematic, generic, and even philosophical terrain of the unrealized. In the outline of parts and chapters that follow, the reader will find more detail on how this dialectical structure operates.

Chapter 1 is the only section of the book that stands outside the structure just described. It presents a theoretical framework for examining the unrealized film and is therefore unconnected to either a conceptual opposition or a specific unrealized film. In this chapter, my task is to approach the question of the unfinished film by posing some basic questions about how completion and incompletion of the work of art has been defined and interpreted generally. I then complicate this with the specific instance of the cinema medium and the potential pitfalls of its regimented phases of production, its multiplication of possible incompletions. How has incompletion been understood in cinema studies, and what space is there for reorienting assumptions about the unfinished and unrealized film? I propose here the idea of an "imaginary cinema," a cinema that exists in the imagination of both creator and viewer, without any concrete filmed material. Eisenstein's little-known ideas about the dialectical relationship between the finished and the unfinished, along with his concept of the immaterial masterpiece, are examined here in order to develop the methodological possibilities of reading the unrealized film. The chapter concludes with a discussion of some primary techniques of Eisenstein's preproduction practices, an understanding of which will allow us to begin our analyses of his unrealized films.

I then move to my dialectical and tripartite structure. And, as indicated, in part I, I organize my analysis around the conceptual opposition of the ideal and the material—a contrast between that which

operates ideally and in the mind and that which operates materially, in physically visible form. In this context, I examine the external similarities of two remarkable projects, both of which emerge around 1927 and each of which seems, in its own way, to crystallize the tension between the ideal (the idea, what is imagined) and the material (the real, what is possible). Chapter 2 is devoted to *Glass House* (1927–30), an idea that first appears in work notebooks of 1927, a film about a multistory residential building made entirely from glass, a concept that Eisenstein worked at off and on for three years. By far the most creatively fruitful aspect of the project was its optical expansiveness and its possibilities for shooting multiple planes of action through visually permeable planes of glass, which spurred Eisenstein's production of a multitude of drawings and inventive visual ideas. Chapter 3 focuses on *Capital* (1927–28), a film that Eisenstein conceived as an adaptation of Karl Marx's *Capital: Critique of Political Economy*. The possibility that the director imagined with this project was of enacting a cinematic language that could operate entirely free of any type of anecdotal reality, an intellectual cinema of concepts and theses. This led to the attempt, with *Capital*, to create what Eisenstein called a *kinotraktat*. The director's primary interest lay not in the adaptation of the content of Marx's *Capital*, but in the adaptation of his method. The film's narrative was meant to move according to the principle of the dialectic, to dally with the associative technique of James Joyce, but ultimately to lead viewers' minds along a path that would cause them to assimilate Marxian patterns of cognition. Here we see the director struggling to make his still-recent discovery of Marx, Engels, and Lenin align with the mercurial general line of party Marxism. Eisenstein developed the *Capital* concept for several months before setting it aside to concentrate on other projects that he hoped would lead to the technical and formal innovations that he thought necessary in order to make *Capital* practically achievable, a plan that never came to fruition. *Capital* and *Glass House* are both projects for which Eisenstein felt deep if temporary passion despite the skepticism of potential collaborators. Neither film moved beyond disorganized note pages, neither gelled into any easily graspable story, but both are undergirded by a shared internal conceptual limitlessness. Both projects reveal an enthusiasm for creating unbounded worlds that required new forms of storytelling—which gave rise to a condition of impossibility (or unlikeliness) that a proper scenario would ever be written for either project.

In part II, the thematic frame of reference shifts to a related but different theoretical opposition: the objective and its antipode, the subjective. I organize my consideration of the two primary film projects on which Eisenstein worked while in the United States in 1930 around Eisenstein's treatment of objective reality and psychological subjectivity, with special focus on the correlation between objectivity and cinema's visual plane and the opposing correlation between subjectivity and the audio of the soundtrack. The plan for each imagined film focuses heavily on the theoretical possibilities of sound film and audiovisual counterpoint, and both notably (because of how such concerns synced with questions of narration) were conceived as literary adaptations. We see the director in transition between technical experiments to endow Soviet film heroes with externally audible speech—as had been mandated by Stalin—and the transformational repurposing of these techniques in scripts written for a Hollywood studio, where he would attempt to endow paragons of American capitalism with a new form of internal speech. Chapter 4 discusses *Sutter's Gold* (1930), the first filmscript that Eisenstein submitted to Paramount, the Hollywood studio with which he was contracted in 1930. It was an adaptation of Blaise Cendrars's 1925 novel about John Sutter (born Johann August Suter) and the mid-nineteenth-century California Gold Rush. The project represents Eisenstein's first fully prepared screenplay to incorporate a sound design and sound cues. The screenplay was praised both inside and outside the studio, but it was not accepted for production, purportedly because of concerns over budget. In chapter 5, we follow the failure of *Sutter's Gold* with Eisenstein's next studio assignment, *An American Tragedy* (1930), an adaptation of Theodore Dreiser's vast novel of American greed. In this adaptation, the director found an opportunity to further develop his work with sound montage toward the implementation of the device of the cinematic internal monologue. He developed this technique with reference to the literary monologues of James Joyce's *Ulysses* and aimed to employ it in order to deepen the tragic quality of the film, and to metaphorize the disjuncture between audio and video in the film's diegesis with the disjuncture between thought and action in the phenomenal world. Like its predecessor at Paramount, the script was praised but not accepted for production.

These American screenplays emerge from early twentieth-century novels, the adaptation of which gives Eisenstein the opportunity to explore methods of audio technique in order to rework the ideological

fabric of a story, as well as to deepen the sensual atmosphere of the action and to complicate the psychology of the main character. In both cases, the central character around whom the film revolves diverges drastically from Eisenstein's previous collective heroes. They are larger-than-life, tragic figures, and the director develops a technique of internal monologue to heighten the audience's experience of their inner worlds and to exploit the existing structures of tragedy along which the characters are plotted.

In part III, I address Eisenstein's theoretical fascination, pursued after his return to the Soviet Union, with the cinematic possibilities of the montage of chronological eras—his experimentation with resolving the apparent incongruity between the concepts of sequence and simultaneity. The part focuses on two time-obsessed film projects the director developed partially in response to a governmental call for ideologically motivating films, each of which attempts to bend the rules of time and space. Chapter 6 addresses *MMM* (1932–33), Eisenstein's attempt at a full-scale Soviet comedy. It revolves around a character, the eponymous Maxim Maximovich Maxim, a well-intentioned Soviet bureaucrat who accidentally and fantastically summons into contemporary Moscow an entourage of stereotypical figures from ancient Rus'; they leap down from their church frescoes toward misadventure in the modern capital. The film is envisioned as a slapstick time-travel comedy, a satire of bureaucracy and misplaced pathos, and a philosophical metaphor of chronological and national discontinuity, as Russia's mythical past crashes violently against the reality of Soviet ideology and socialist daily life. Several drafts of a screenplay, many drawings, and various preparatory materials (including casting and location-scouting notes) were produced. The film was hastily set aside in 1933, as Eisenstein quickly switched his focus to a film dedicated specifically to the Soviet capital city, a move made at least partially in response to the Soviet government's call for works of art addressing the past, present, and future of the heroic capital. Chapter 7 investigates *Moscow* (1933), a film in which the director hoped to continue his previous project's technique of staging anachronisms against the backdrop of a present-day Moscow. Eisenstein's concept was to show Moscow through various historical epochs: the birth of Muscovite royalty, Ivan the Terrible, the time of Peter the Great, the invasion by Napoleon, the 1917 revolution, and the new time of communism. The film was also meant to be organized, in Shakespearean style, around the four elements: water, earth, fire, and air. These two film projects

show the newly returned Eisenstein's somewhat desperate grasping after new material and modes of filmmaking that might suit his place in a changed Russia that he seemed unable to comprehend. Comedy and history interact in complex and often confused ways in these projects. In a close examination of *MMM*'s strange textual shape—its libretto and story, its introduction, its equivocating statement of ideological content, its verse form and embedded cultural and literary allusions that are embedded within it—I discover Eisenstein's canny and evasive ideological acrobatics. Somewhat safer ideological somersaults can be seen in *Moscow*'s reliance on a transpersonal, elemental relationship to time and the possibility of interpenetration between disparate eras. This complex treatment of historical sequence as a collision of simultaneity is a structural principle we see the director developing from his work on *The General Line* in the late 1920s and somewhat later in *¡Que viva México!*

Finally, in the conclusion, I devote a brief analysis to the production history of Eisenstein's incomplete and censored *Bezhin Meadow* in order to trace some characteristic coordinates of its unrealization and to delineate the category of the partially filmed or lost project from the one for which the possibility of a film frame exists strictly in the cinematic imagination. In this conclusion, I also review the major themes that emerged in this study of the imaginary film, particularly as they operate within the dialectical chapter structure that I have outlined. My final observations are about the unrealized film as such: the contingencies of failure, the inherent impossibilities of cinema, and the relevance of the concept of the unrealized for the entirety of a filmmaker's oeuvre.

With this book's analysis of Eisenstein's series of unrealized film projects structured in this way, its reader should be able not only to gain a specific sense of some of the more audacious and complex formal endeavors of one of early cinema's most important practitioners but also to come to a recognition of the value and function of the unrealized film—and of the *third tusk*, the space that such films occupy between the theory and practice that makes up the filmmaker's larger body of work. Running one's eye over these works of cinema, film ideas whose existence can only be traced to archival remnants on paper, one comes to realize the extent to which the practice of cinema is fragile, even phantasmic, and simultaneously just how material the processes of imagining cinema often are. Certainly, such an outcome would lead to a more holistic view of Eisenstein and his working methods as a

filmmaker, but—this is my hope—it should also allow Eisenstein and his unrealized films to stand in for all filmmakers who have practiced the medium and are trailed by the inevitable debris of the unfinished and to demand a more persistent consideration of this intangible, easily forgotten, though very real labor.

Chapter 1

Toward an Imaginary Cinema

> A movie not imprinted on film doesn't exist.
>
> —Michelangelo Antonioni, "Preface to *Six Films*" (1964)

This book, at its essence, is about parts and wholes. It is about the relationship between fragment and fullness, between the incomplete and the complete, the dependent and the autonomous. It is a book about the unfinished, the work of art for which the *work* remains infinitely extended, always still to be done—a strange artifact of creative labor that in its partialness speaks perpetually of its own potential, that bears the scent of tragic interruption, that necessarily eludes the viewer's full perception. And specifically, it is about the phenomenon of the unfinished within the artistic and theoretical production of Soviet filmmaker Sergei Eisenstein.

In an essay that addresses the function of riddles, meant for inclusion in his unfinished theoretical work *Method* (1943–48), Eisenstein writes that the true solver of riddles, a thinker with a "sufficiently nimble command of *pars pro toto*," once provided with any representative feature of a puzzle, will be "capable of using this characteristic part to reconstruct the whole."[1] *Pars pro toto* is the mechanism, usually a figure of speech or other discursive device, in which the part is made to stand in for the whole from which it is taken. It is one of the key concepts of Eisenstein's restless body of aesthetic theory, one that he developed out of his reading of anthropologist Rudolf Bilz and saw as an important function of prelinguistic, sensual thinking—as he put it, "a means

of approaching the unknown via the known."[2] Of course, when the "riddle" in question is an incomplete work of art, viewers do typically deal with what is known, what is concrete, what is present and subject to reading, analysis, and criticism and yet, at the same moment, they are inhibited by the work's fragmentariness. Techniques of reading and processing are troubled, halted. Viewers may question the legitimacy of the part they encounter. Or they may, as Eisenstein might have hoped, be induced via the part that they see before them—the known—to visualize the unknown: that missing remainder of the work that did not come into existence, or that exists abstractly elsewhere. What and where is "the rest" of the unfinished work? What and where is its ideal, immaterial, absent fullness?

That Phantom World

Such questions, which frame our ability to understand the unfinished work of art, have troubled thinkers since at least the period of classical antiquity. Commonly cited as evidence of this is a statement that appears in the first-century writings of Pliny the Elder. Here, the author laments the lost and unreachable whole that the unfinished work always implies, writing "It is . . . a very unusual and memorable fact that the last works of artists and their unfinished pictures . . . are more admired than those which they have finished . . . and in the midst of approval's beguilement we feel regret that the artist's hand while engaged in the work was removed by death."[3] Pliny foregrounds both pleasure and pain here in the reception of the unfinished work, along with the determining, inexorable shadow of mortality.

When Eisenstein died in 1948, the unfinished nature of the many projects he had begun but not finished was irrevocably sealed. Some films had long been abandoned, but others (in the domains of cinema and theory alike) were still actively developing. Of course, this mortal solemnizing of the unfinished work is a universal process for all who create. As Pliny suggests, death must be seen as the ultimate interruption; not only does it force individual works into states of observable incompletion but it also casts a shroud of partialness over entire bodies of work. In a sense, death may always be read in the incompleteness of any work or oeuvre; even when it is not literal death that removes the artist's hand from the work, the viewer must still contend with the artist's unexpected absence, must still encounter the unfulfilled whole, to some extent, as a fatal sign of crisis. And yet, it is precisely this crisis

that, according to Pliny, allows for a heightened degree of perception and appreciation, since the unfinished work affords us the opportunity to see "the preliminary drawings left visible and the artists' actual thoughts."[4] An object that bears the trace of its suspended process—not unlike the Vesuvian fossils with which Pliny's name is permanently connected—offers, along with an unmistakable charge of ontological urgency, a privileged view, an invitation to observe the artist's plans and preparatory steps, and somehow to trace outward from these their interior processes, to "see" the artist's thoughts.

Notions such as these seem to have especially attended discussions of the unfinished works of prominent artists from the Renaissance on. See Giorgio Vasari's writing on Leonardo da Vinci's notorious inability to finish the works he had begun ("he envisioned such subtle, marvelous, and difficult problems that his hands, while extremely skillful, were incapable of ever realizing them") or Benedetto Varchi's description of Michelangelo's unfinished sculptures (they "show the depth and excellence of his intellect and genius, and greater value was placed on these, than his other works, however finished").[5] Later in this chapter we will see that for Eisenstein, these two Renaissance figures occupied exactly such symbolic positions relative to the question of completion. To him, da Vinci was the paragon of the utopian impulse within the unfinished, its openness and impossibility; and Michelangelo represented the inchoate expressive power of the unfinished. In Eisenstein's analysis as well as in those of Vasari and Varchi, an interplay is established between the extant work and the vast ("marvelous," "excellent") unseen, imaginary space that its unfinished state implies. Here, we may see the pattern of primary conflicts inherent in the unfinished work of art—those between the material and the ideal, the possible and the impossible, the visible and the invisible, the formed and the inchoate.

In this formulation of the unfinished, emphasis is placed on the process of composition, the artist imparting form to that which is still unformed, leaving open the question of the artist's awareness of this process and his or her ability to determine when it has come to its conclusion. The difficulty that arises between intention and completion within the act of creation has inspired some, such as the American philosopher of aesthetics Monroe Beardsley, to critique the commonly held, and from his position fallacious, "teleological" view of artistic creation, in which the end is the constant determining factor of creation, that the artist somehow holds in mind the "quality" of the finished work and knows that when that quality is achieved, the work is done. Instead, Beardsley

promotes the idea that artistic creation is not a purpose-driven activity, but rather a process of self-correction that, emanating from a beginning point, allows "the artist [to] constantly redirect their aims."[6] In this process-based paradigm, the question, for Beardsley, inevitably becomes "How does the artist know when to stop?"[7] Instead of considering completion to be a predetermined end of the artist, one that exists even abstractly in the thoughts of the creator, Beardsley suggests that completion is something determined by the demands of the elements of form themselves. If the work is capable, through the arrangement of its aesthetic units, of standing on its own, whether because of or despite the efforts of the creator, it can be seen as potentially complete. This removal of an all-determining teleological end calls up another of Paul Valéry's purported statements on process and completion: that "the work of art is never completed, but only abandoned."[8] This idea has been paraphrased by W. H. Auden, Jean Cocteau, and even George Lucas.[9] An annotation to Valéry's maxim seems relevant here—and we may cite both Eisenstein's *¡Que viva México!* and *Bezhin Meadow* as examples, since in both cases there have been posthumous attempts to arrange the material of these unfinished projects into coherent wholes—which is that the artist (especially the filmmaker) is not always the one to determine that abandonment, but that the end of a given work is sometimes determined by patrons, producers, or censors.

What we see here is a gap between competing diagnoses of completion. Given the existence of such gaps, it becomes necessary to distinguish conceptions of completion that are based on understandings of (an arrested or concluded) process from ones in which incompletion appears as a condition of the impossibility in regard to the completed artwork or a subjectivity capable of creating the same. Certainly, works of art from various categories exist that are clearly aesthetically incomplete but that need not be or have not been considered unfinished. In *Art and Intention*, Paisley Livingston develops a thesis of the unfinished that focuses on the phenomenon of the fragment (a "partially existing" work that is abandoned, interrupted externally, or lost to time and history) and, in particular, the "romantic fragment" (the work that intentionally *appears* to be part of a larger work but is, in fact, determined by the artist, to be finished). Livingston analyzes Samuel Taylor Coleridge's 1816 *Kubla Khan* as a paradigmatic example of "inspirationist conception" in creativity, in which the artist operates as a conduit between a work's ideal, intangible existence and its concrete manifestation in the profane world.[10] In *Kubla Khan*, a dreaming poet,

his hand moving as if in a trance, with words flowing onto paper, is interrupted by an unexpected knock at the door—and the deep productive spell within the throes of which the poet had found himself is broken, and the memory of the dream, the access to the work's unwritten material, evaporates after the intrusion.[11] The poet's lament is that "all that phantom-world so fair vanishes," that composition must cease, and the work's fragmentary, incomplete structure becomes fixed.[12] To draw a distinction between what Beardsley called "genetic completion" (whether a work has been deemed complete by its creator, whether it has reached its intended end) and what he himself calls "aesthetic completion" (whether it takes the expected form of completion), Livingston argues that not all genetically complete works are also aesthetically complete. And, inversely, many aesthetically complete works may be genetically incomplete. This resonates with Charles Baudelaire's famous observation—rooted too in the soil of romanticism after the Paris Salon of 1845—that "there is a great difference between a work that is *complete* and a work that is *finished*; that, in general, what is *complete* is not *finished*, and that a thing that is highly *finished* need not be *complete* at all."[13]

Eisenstein was unmistakably aware of such techniques in some of his favorite artists—we might think first of Piranesi's Roman etchings or of the rhythmic ellipses in Alexander Pushkin's poetry—and the idea that a fragment might speak for the incomplete or missing whole, as we have seen, was a fundamental principle of the director's aesthetics. Like Livingston, Eisenstein was interested in the metonymic function of the part relative to the whole and the hoisting of the question of "finish" from a procedural category into a thematic category. All this insists that somewhere in the gap between the genetic and the aesthetic modes of completion, somewhere between artistic intention and the demands or felicities of form, the question of the *metaphorical function* of the unfinished, whether actual or stylistically motivated, has become principal: what, specifically, is the value of this tension between the available part, finished to whatever extent it may be, and the absent whole?

In artistic texts such as those mentioned, this tension can be seen pulsating between the partially realized work and the suggestion it makes of the one imagined, a dynamic that may have initially emerged as the product of accident (death, circumstance, etc.) but now appears as intention, a deliberate aesthetic effect. Such is the suggestion of incompleteness deployed by artists working intentionally in a *nonfinito* style, where apparently unfinished elements remain contiguous to finished ones, highlighting the artist's choice of when and where to complete a

work. While this transition in the history of the unfinished—moving from practical necessity to stylistic preference or expressive technique—can be seen anywhere from the subtle mixture of extreme articulation and underarticulation in works by Rembrandt, or in Courbet's highly finished details inserted into grounds of roughed-in colors and tonalities, perhaps the most commonly considered instance is the characteristic unfinished style in the sculptural works of Auguste Rodin and the explicit inheritance taken from sculptures left incomplete centuries before by Michelangelo (his *Prisoners* of the early sixteenth century, for example). We will see below that Eisenstein demonstrated a particular interest in this relationship between necessity and style within the unfinished, and that he wrote in his incomplete theoretical opus *Method* that he considered the works of both Michelangelo and Rodin to express the inherent transition within the act of creation between the "undefined" and the "defined."

If the examples just given might be associated with certain tendencies of romantic fragmentariness and its legacies, another important manifestation of the power of the unfinished can be found in works that, though themselves not of fragmentary form, elevate the question of artistic incompletion to a thematic level. This may especially be observed in works of realistic prose from the nineteenth century and beyond. Writers beloved of Eisenstein, from Nikolai Gogol to Émile Zola (each of whom he analyzes in his theoretical essays), produced fiction that thematizes the unfinished work, tying it specifically to the terror of artistic failure—the inability to give a proper form to the as-yet formless. For Gogol, this occurs through demonic forces in his 1835 story "The Portrait," in which—through a device not unlike Oscar Wilde's much later *The Picture of Dorian Gray*—the titular painting and the uncannily rendered eyes of its lifelike subject, surrounded by an otherwise less-than-finished composition, drive its beholders toward their worser impulses and the artist Chartkov to an early death.[14] In Zola's 1885 *The Masterpiece*, the image of the unfinished subsumes the artist's body in its own representation. The novel's central character, the painter Claude Lantier, who attempts to complete his great masterpiece while slowly succumbing to blindness, finally hangs himself before the incomplete canvas, producing the ultimate tableau of the unfinished: the mortal artist dangling before the infinity of open form.[15]

These artists, each contending with the completion of their artworks' forms, above all else, perhaps, demonstrates the delicate play that exists between the concepts of incompleteness and completeness,

the one verging (or not) into the other—and this reifies a dialectic between absence and presence (of artist, artwork, image, etc.) that is one of the vital driving forces of artistic production: putting form to a material that has not yet been formed. Moreover, this process of realization, of form's coming into being, executed to whatever degree it may be, demonstrates that the concepts of "finished" and "finishedness" are conventional, and that these conventions change, that they are as dependent on the specific expectations of a given medium as they are on any objective criterion of completion. What is clear is that a conceptual bond exists between the *work-already-present* and the *work-not-yet-present*. This bond, extending through a veil of phenomenal reality, connecting the partial to an unseen and supposed whole, is one, crucially, that mobilizes and privileges the imagination. The existing part of the unfinished work may be seen as charting an abstract otherworld in which the full work seems to invisibly exist, activated by an imagination—either the creator's or the viewer's. In either case, that unseen whole awaits a necessary moment of creative disclosure, of afflatus.

The Imaginary Cinema

When the question of completion touches cinema specifically, it appears to become even more complex. On a primarily symbolic level, deep signals of incompleteness are inherent in the function of the film reel, with its proliferation of still images that create the illusion of continuous movement, ever with an interjected gap of imperceptible nothingness between successive images; in other words, the medium is intrinsically incomplete, always flitting between its native fragmentariness and a transformational desire for wholeness.[16] Moreover, throughout the course of twentieth-century film discourse, cinema's claims to the status of high art were often arbitrated specifically in terms of the medium's resistance to the pursuit of a total mimetic experience, "that striving after likeness to nature which has hitherto permeated the whole history of the visual arts," as Rudolf Arnheim writes.[17] Twentieth-century theoreticians from Arnheim ("The Complete Film") to André Bazin ("The Myth of Total Cinema"), based cinema's claim to constitute a legitimate artform specifically in its resistance to the incorporation of new technologies such as sound synchronization, color photography, the wide-screen format, or three-dimensional technology. For such thinkers, cinema-as-art was contingent on a limit to its action on the sensorium. This line of reasoning suggests a logic by which, against

the flow of cinema's technological progress, a reduction in the medium's material exhaustiveness and an intentional limit of its mimetic, sensory force somehow strengthens its aesthetic power.[18] Indeed, some filmmakers, like Robert Bresson, have built their arsenal of techniques around this principle, insisting on producing work for an audience that divines "the whole of which they are given only a part."[19] Filmmakers from the 1920s onward have followed this theoretical inclination by choosing to deny cinema's urge for sensorial totality and creating works that rely on various kinds of deliberate sensory voids (films without image, films without sound, effaced images) and, as Justin Remes has recently put it, in so doing "exploit the power of absence."[20]

But it should be acknowledged that on a more procedural level, cinema's native resistance to completion is in large part due to the medium's regimentation of production phases—that a given project may be expected to move through initial written forms (notes, treatments, screenplays), graphic forms (set or costume sketches, storyboards), constructed forms (sets, costumes), test footage, surpluses of production footage, and any number of edits that lead to a final version of the film, printed for distribution. And the leaps between these sequential stages are often abrupt, atemporal, transpersonal, and abstract. This frequently shambolic series of production stages is complicated, moreover, by the reality that a project's movement through such phases is as subject to the contingencies of studio or committee approval as it is to the vagaries of creative fortitude. Complicating the declaration attributed to Rembrandt, that "a work is complete if in it the master's intentions have been realized,"[21] the vagaries of film's production processes are a reminder of its status as an industrial art form more appropriately defined by the ironic pendant to Rembrandt's maxim repeated by Gilles Deleuze and attributed to Federico Fellini in which "when there is no more money left, the film will be finished."[22] And if we take into account the innumerable films from all national cinema industries that have become stuck in what Hollywood likes to call either development or production "hell," then even the cynical pragmatism of Fellini's version seems to be a best-case scenario. Unlike almost any other category of art, cinema requires a long chain of total transformations in discrete units of form, of which only the final manifestation is intended to be visible. Indeed, the formal and conceptual divergence between the initial stages of a film and its final ones is often so vast as to make such stages almost incommensurable. Eisenstein was particularly fond of his friend and collaborator Isaac Babel's quip on this quality of the cinema

process, that "writing a script is like calling out [for] the midwife on your wedding night."[23] Within such contingent processes of development and production, the questions begin to seem unavoidable: What becomes of these early links in the chain, the preparatory artifacts from initial stages, each of which may bear their own distinct markers of completeness or unfinishedness? And what relation do they bear to the final, allegedly complete, work of cinema?

Certainly, there is a mythologizing tradition related to cinema's incomplete work, and especially the incomplete works of prominent filmmakers—prominently Alexander Korda and Josef von Sternberg's *I, Claudius* (1937), Orson Welles's *Don Quixote* (1957–85), Alejandro Jodorowsky's *Dune* (1974–76), and Yuri Norshtein's *The Overcoat* (1981–). Representation of unrealized films such as these—and often with the would-be director's narrative assistance—tends to emphasize the tragic aspect of the films' various curtailments: the catastrophic happenstance, the lost footage, the filmmakers' utopianism, the production's persecution at the hands of studio executives or financiers, the premature deaths of directors or actors, and so on.[24] The lament "What might have been?" is the dominant one underscoring the general attitude toward these films, and such attempts to present what fragmentary materials these projects may have produced serve simply to further fetishize incompleteness and advance the impossibility that these films will ever truly be "viewed."[25] Such mythologizing is predicated conceptually on the disproportionate tragedy of fruition's absence in particular cases and ignores the absolute ubiquity of incompletion to be found in the creative process. Indeed, if incompletion is seen as an unfortunate aberration within the filmmaking process, mourning the absence inherent in the unfinished work may appear natural enough, but it creates what, in the context of this study, would be a false affiliation with a type of film that belongs to an entirely separate category: the completed film that has merely been "lost" (that is, is missing, destroyed, deteriorated, suppressed). On the other hand, if incompletion is taken as a natural and routine phenomenon within the process of filmmaking, and if the active exercise of imagining the unrealized is taken as a necessary function of both filmmaker and film viewer, the meaning of the unfinished film is altered, and its features open themselves for investigation.

Moreover, when incompletion shows itself to be a persistent fact of a given filmmaker's body of work (as in Eisenstein, Welles, or Erich von Stroheim), the problem becomes more intriguingly complex. In her work on Maya Deren, Sarah Keller frames the issue this way: "How

[should we] address 'unfinished' creative work, particularly in the case of a gifted artist's whole oeuvre," especially when that oeuvre is "always already marked by incompletion" and even "depend[s] on an aesthetic of open-endedness."[26] In a case such as this, the elegiac question "What might have been" no longer seems relevant, at least not to a cinema practice that begins to be defined by this very contingency, by its lack of definitive final texts. Experimental filmmakers of the middle twentieth century—Deren, with her open-ended Haitian project (1947–54) or Hollis Frampton with his barely begun *Magellan* cycle (1976–84)—have produced work that itself alludes to this tension between cinema's native incompleteness and its formal drive toward a finished form, and more recently Ilya Khrzhanovsky's audacious and controversial project *Dau* (2006–) may be said to trod a somewhat similar path along the medium's simultaneous tendency toward expansiveness and its demand for finitude. Eisenstein, as we have seen, saw himself in exactly this light: a frequent producer of indispensable but unviewable cinematic labor. To a multitude of endeavors in film, these and many others besides, one might easily append the slogan with which Auguste Préault inscribed his 1864 *Medallion for Eugène Delacroix*, playing there on a multivalence possible in the French: "Je ne suis pas pour le fini. Je suis pour l'infini" ("I am not for the finished [the finite]. I am for the infinite.").[27] For work that seems to develop according to such an ethos, what has *not* made its way to the screen is every bit as compelling as that which *has*.[28]

Within the film studies world, movements such as those that have produced the Orphan Film Symposium or the Il Cinema Ritrovato festival indicate that there is a trend toward studying the fragmentary, incomplete, and process-intense artifacts of cinema for their own sake, and not merely as signifiers of a (tragically) absent whole. Recent studies of "the unwatchable" have even proposed methods for understanding films that resist their own viewing, a category within which one may find films that are for various reasons neither whole nor even phenomenally present at all.[29] Film scholars such as Salazkina in her work on *¡Que viva México!*, Jonathan Rosenbaum in his brief essays on Welles's *Don Quixote*, and Keller in her monograph on Deren have all produced scholarship that purposefully approaches the unfinished film on its own terms, avoids the fetishization of failure, and suggests, in different ways, how the unfinished may serve as an indicator of cinema's essential dynamisms.[30]

For my analysis of the unfinished in Eisenstein's work, I propose the term *imaginary cinema* as a lens through which to consider the

unfinished film. With this designation, my intention is to emphasize and, quixotically, to render more tangible the immense amount of mostly intangible work that goes into the production of cinema, at all its various stages, before it is deemed cinema in its traditional sense. Imaginary cinema is the film sketched out but never written, the film scribbled down in notes but without a script, the screenplay never shot. It is the part that suggests the whole that its creator(s) intended. Throughout the process of most film production, the film itself remains almost entirely imagined, a vision screened in the minds of those making it, an abstraction toward which there is a desperate struggle of incarnation.[31] A quotation from Maya Deren (which Keller reproduces in her book) plays appropriately here. Speaking to a group of Smith College students in 1961 about the cognitive similarities between early computers and the human mind, and noting their shared ability to envision an object and test it virtually before bringing it into physical existence, Deren claims "This is exactly the way the imagination does work, and this is its purpose. Imagine; if you had to actually go through everything without being able to imagine it first!"[32] Deren's canny wordplay here might be seen as a motto for the task of engaging with the imaginary film: imagine the significance of the imaginary. The metaphor leads her to directly discuss the cinema process's requirement of intense preparation ("very careful planning") despite the endeavor's eternal subordination to the uncontrollable ("the vital accident"). This "imagining" of the film-not-yet-a-film sets up a useful duality: on the one hand we have the imagined film, on the other the fully realized one. Between the two we seek out the actual traces that the imagination leaves on the path toward realization, the textual, graphic, and verbal artifacts of the production process. These traces of the film's imagining may be observed always to approach their object but never to reach them: the completed film, once incarnate, no longer depends on the forces of imagination that produced it.

To emphasize the protracted stages of imagination in film production, I intentionally limit my selection of Eisenstein's unfinished films to those projects for which there is no actual film, projects that never advanced as far as principal photography. And yet, in analyzing them, I treat the prefilm traces of the filmmaker's imaginary labors as legitimate cinematic objects. What can such instances of imaginary cinema tell us about the palimpsest of processes engaged in the production of a film? How do these strange documents work as cinema? What relationship do they bear to that which they were meant to project? What role

can they be seen to play in a cinematic oeuvre? The study is devoted not to the *what if* of these unrealized projects but to their *actuality*, to the preparatory materials themselves (notes, treatments, drawings, screenplays) as objects of cinematic imagination and as foundational texts of a cinema that is always in the process of being imagined.

Odd and Even: A Dialectic of Completion

In November 1927, barely five years into his career as a filmmaker, Eisenstein had already begun to feel the symbolic burden of the growing number of projects he had not been able to complete. In a diary entry from this time, amid notes that show him considering what seems to be a book chapter on such unrealized projects, he lists the major theater and film endeavors of his young career in the chronological order of their undertaking. In compiling this list, the director detects a strange pattern: all the odd-numbered projects of the sequence—*The Mexican* (staged March 1921), *Wiseman* (staged April 1923), *Are You Listening, Moscow?!* (staged November 1923), *Gasmasks* (staged February 1924), *Strike* (premiered April 1925), *The Battleship Potemkin* (premiered December 1925), and *The General Line*—had been successfully completed.[33] The interpolating even-numbered projects, however—*King Hunger* (1921), *Garland's Inheritance* (1923), *Patatras* (1923), *Triapitsyn* (date unclear), *Red Cavalry* (1924), and *Dzhungo* (1926)—had all failed to come to fruition. Eisenstein then bestows on these unrealized works the ironically deterministic epithet "even-numbered productions" (*chetnye postanovki*).[34]

After meticulously charting this pattern—in which the transition from theater to film happens also to fall in line with this odd/even

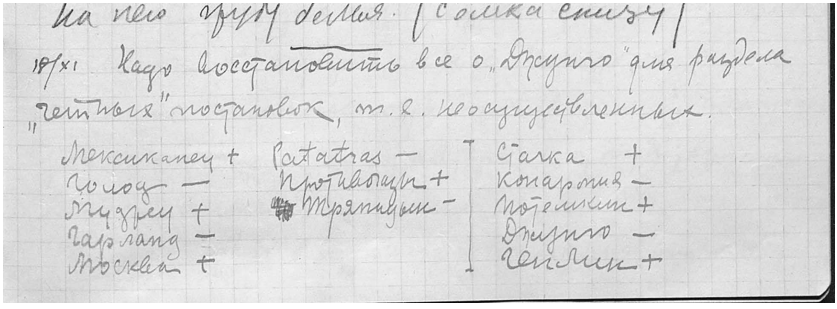


Figure 2.1. The odd and even productions. RGALI, 1923-2-1104, 46. Used with permission.

alternation, making *Strike*, for example, both the first (odd) work of film and the ninth (odd) work overall—the filmmaker pauses to wonder, with a kind of superstitious submission to this law of numbers, which of his three currently developing film projects—*October*, *Glass House*, and *Capital*—should, if the pattern were to continue, be placed in the list as odd and destined for completion and which designated as even and thereby doomed to incompletion.[35] This instance of almost gnostic self-interrogation, even if half-playful, suggests a superstitious view of the creative process in which incompletion of projects is not only inevitable, but also necessary for the completion of the projects with which they alternate—without the even, the logic suggests, there can be no odd.

And yet it would seem that the rigidity of this essentially dialectical system still allowed for the possibility of its manipulation. That Eisenstein meant to maneuver within the system he had himself outlined is demonstrated in a diary entry made almost one year later, on 12 September 1928, in which he records another hasty thought about two of the projects currently in parallel development: "*Khap* will be an odd-numbered work. And *Glass House* will be even!!!! It is not worth it to do it in America—[where it would be] not even!!!"[36] Here there is a sense of hope (still highly exclamatory and therefore, we must assume, best read with some irony) that a total change of location, from the Soviet Union to the United States, might have enabled Eisenstein to restart the sequence, thus changing *Glass House* from an even-numbered to an odd-numbered work, the first to be done in America, and therefore, by this magical thinking, possible to realize.[37]

The plunge into numerology aside, this diary analysis of the success of his own oeuvre demonstrates the extent to which the growing corpus of unrealized works had begun to embed itself in Eisenstein's creative self-concept, even at a relatively early stage and, perhaps more intriguingly, shows how the gravity of these unmade films triggered the abstract functions of his imagination. At the same time, the notes betray the director's stoic sense that the complete work almost demands the experience gained in the preparations toward the incomplete work in order to generate its necessary momentum. This is not to suggest that Eisenstein maintained the rigid view of some law of strict alternation between the complete and the incomplete, the realized and the imagined, as these notes might imply when taken in isolation—but it is to observe that his perception of a meaningful, productive, and even dialectical relationship between the complete

and the unfinished is undeniable. Chapter 2 of this book will examine a specific instance of this reciprocal phenomenon between two of his ambitious projects of the late 1920s, *Glass House* and *Capital*, where the magisterial accomplishment of intellectual cinema that was the anticipated end of the *Capital* project appears to depend heavily on the discoveries to be made and work to be accomplished in pursuit of the simultaneously developing *Glass House* project, work on the one oriented toward the realization of technique that would make possible the creation of the other.

In this treatment of the reciprocal relationship between works—of the odd and even, so to speak—and in the suggestion of a quasimystical view of creative sequencing, one may see the seed, still far from full development, of what would be expressed in Eisenstein's much later piece of writing under the heading "Even and Odd: Bifurcation of the Singular," which was to be included in the second volume of *Method*. Eisenstein opens this work with a long passage quoted from Marcel Granet's *La pensée chinoise* (1934) that details the conceptual operation of the Chinese dialectic: "The Odd contains within itself and separates out from itself the Even, which is merely the external two-sided (right and left, yin and yang) manifestation of the Odd."[38] The passage ultimately demonstrates the coexistence and interdependence of the two figures, odd and even, and suggests that what separates the one from the other is a question not of numerical quantity but of internal quality. This is also what unites each manifestation of the odd with all others, and likewise each even with every other manifestation of its kind. After this long passage, Eisenstein writes, "Is it not the case that this sounds like some kind of strange half-mystical raving? And at the same time, somewhere [and] somehow—I would say somewhere 'apart from' consciousness—you feel some sort of rightness in these assertions. Somewhere not in the brain, but in the region of the . . . tendons (!) you feel that somewhere in the dynamism of these concepts there is something real."[39] These last observations, here on the Chinese sequential system, could just have easily been written about the sequential system he proposed for his own creative biography above—though it may sound like a sort of "strange half-mystical raving," one senses something truly operative in the conceptual dynamic.

From a position of historical distance, these observations on the dialectical power of the even and odd sequence over his creative output cannot but highlight the tragic naïveté of the young Eisenstein, writing in 1927, about his future endeavors in filmmaking. How

was he to know, after all, that this steady pattern of completion and noncompletion would break very soon? How could he have known the way it would break, and with what dramatic force? How different his interpretation of the pattern might have been had he known that *every* feature film project he would undertake in the decade between 1929 and late 1938—between the compromised completion of *The General Line* and the release of *Alexander Nevsky*—would remain strictly within his own imagination: unfilmed, unfinished, and unseen.

The Immaterial Masterpiece

By late 1933, after having experienced a series of immense creative disappointments in his two-year sojourn in Europe, Hollywood, and Mexico, followed by some false starts in his first year back in the Soviet Union, and as a way of marking his tenth anniversary working in cinema, Eisenstein took up the task of editing for publication the screenplays from these unmade projects. His decision seems to have been an early effort at achieving what he would later endeavor in his own defense during his speeches at the 1935 Conference of Soviet Cinema Workers: an attempt to demonstrate, materially, the quality (and reality) of some of his abundant unscreenable work. Though this publication project itself never came to fruition, thereby multiplying the layers of nonrealization, Eisenstein did prepare the draft of a preface for the collection, which has been preserved in his archive and was published by Naum Kleiman in a 1982 volume of *Iskusstvo kino* as "Toward a Preface for the Unfinished Pieces."[40] In its task of introducing the unrealized film scripts to the reading public, the essay also demonstrates Eisenstein's developing attitude toward his expanding body of unfinished work and its general relevance for his artistic legacy.

In the essay, he characterizes some of the work he did in the West as the development of a cycle of films around what he described as "superhuman" characters—such as John Sutter, Henri Christophe, Basil Zaharoff, and the fictional Clyde Griffiths of *An American Tragedy*. This description culminates in a quotation from the nineteenth-century Austrian writer Franz Grillparzer, who once wrote in his diary, "I would like to be able to write a tragedy in my mind. It would be a masterpiece!"[41] The possibility of such an immaterial masterpiece was compelling for Eisenstein, who wrote, "Alas, such a fate has befallen the

second five-year period of my creative work. To what extent the compositions of this period are masterpieces—I do not know, but that they remained . . . in the mind, unfortunately, is a fact."[42] What concerns Grillparzer and Eisenstein—the infinity of the mind as a space for both composition and projection, and the dilemma of its occlusion from the outside—is also the central difficulty of Jorge Luis Borges's 1943 story "The Secret Miracle," though that story's interweaving of the existential terror that accompanies such questions of incompletion and immaterial creative labor exactly corresponds to the burdens of the unfinished that Eisenstein expresses here. Borges's protagonist Jaromir Hladik, "author of an unfinished tragedy," is sentenced to death by occupying Nazi forces and brought before a firing squad. As the sergeant gives the order to fire, "the physical universe stop[s]" and Hladik is granted an entire year of frozen time in which to complete his unfinished work. Borges writes that Hladik "had no document but his memory. . . . Painstakingly, motionlessly, secretly, he forged in time his grand invisible labyrinth." Hladik makes cuts, expansions, insertions, perfecting the work until at last, he completes his masterpiece—and as the final words are mentally fixed, time resumes, and Hladik is struck by the bullets of the firing squad.[43]

For Eisenstein, the impulse, against death, to somehow actualize this labor of the mind, even in retrospective summary, leads him to compose in the essay a glancing list of what he calls the "meteoric" proposals for imagined films that had appeared fleetingly in the last years (a jubilee film for Belgian independence, a globe-trotting advertisement about the benefits of Nestlé cocoa, another film about British colonial rule in Africa, and adaptations of Vicki Baum's *Grand Hotel* and Lion Feuchtwanger's *Jud Süß*, to name a few), before coming to a list of eight more substantial unrealized projects or "*inachevés*," to which Grillparzer's concept of the imaginary masterpiece might apply. He lists them as follows:

1. *Glass House*
2. *Sutter*
3. Zakharov—*Götterdämmerung*
4. Haiti [*Black Majesty*]
5. *American Tragedy*
6. *¡Qué viva México!*
7. *MMM*
8. *Moscow*[44]

The film projects enumerated here span the seven years between 1926 and 1933, and each represents an instance of Eisenstein's concerted passion and sustained labor toward the eventual emergence of a full filmic text. Though none ever made it to the screen, they yielded various amounts of precinematic material: the brief but pointed initial notes and sketches for *Black Majesty*, the dozens of pages of notes and drawings for *Glass House*, the full screenplays and director's plans for *Sutter's Gold* and *An American Tragedy*, and the tens of thousands of meters of unedited footage shot for *¡Que viva México!*.

Perhaps more compelling than the list itself (and the conspicuous absence of *Capital* from the sequence) is Eisenstein's assessment of the labor he devoted to these works. He writes, "[In this] series of unsuccessful projects . . . [I experienced] all the delights and voluptuous tremblings of the creative process. But, alas, with one minor nuisance. Telepathy is still not a universally available instrument of knowledge. And therefore, this *opus* is fated to remain tightly held 'within me.'"[45] Eisenstein's interiority features as the sole projection space for these works, his thoughts prove an unreliable medium for their transmission, and his continuing cinematic muteness guarantees their unrealized status. And yet Eisenstein asserts that much within these eight projects came very close to completion, and that "as creatively fully developed pieces, [the projects] bring with them undoubtable experience."[46] Here, again, is a proclamation of the productive artistic value of unfinished work, and not just for its inscription into a subsequent (completed) project, but more for the general development of the filmmaker's aesthetic machinery.

This premise, that the value of the individual unfinished work lies in the power of its potential energy as both expansion of experience and refinement of process, is expressed somewhat differently in the essay's opening pages, where Eisenstein establishes an elaborate correlation between himself and Leonardo da Vinci. This bond was one that he considered to be "deep" and "fateful" and the very thing that led him, at an early age, into the world of artmaking in the first place. Eisenstein focuses on the innate inquisitiveness that he saw himself sharing with da Vinci—and the irony that this inquisitiveness (as we earlier saw Vasari suggesting) might be the root of the tendency toward incompletion:

> "Señor Leonardo sits for months at a time in front of the sketched lines of the fresco," we read somewhere.
>
> This is not laziness. It is not the murderousness of a slow working pace.

> It is curiosity . . . the curiosity to peer inside processes.
>
> The ever-persisting curiosity of little boys who are willing to sacrifice the functioning of a clock in the name of uncovering the secret of that function.
>
> There is no sweeter poison. And none more disastrous for creation.
>
> For this secret, you must pay a bloody price.
>
> For years, your picture will not get off the ground.
>
> All around there will be smiles. The shrugging of shoulders.
>
> But the curiosity drills deeper and deeper into the depths, toward the mastery of the principle.[47]

The incomplete work proposed here is not the tragic product of some external cause (bad timing, censorship), but rather one of a strictly internal development. The emphasis is now on the fascination with process and peering into it, with the theorization of principles, with the constant refinement, elaboration, and complication of the work *toward its end*, rather than with *the end itself*. Indeed, filmmaking, in this view, becomes an entirely nonteleological practice. This might be taken to an extreme: to prolong the pleasure of the process one may even insist on deferring completion. Eisenstein himself provides the explicit sexual metaphor here to close the loop encircling the figures of process, completion, and creation: the Davincian "shamelessness of curiosity" about the artistic process is "a sidelong glance into the bedroom of creativity at the very moment of the 'holy act.' "[48]

Although this metaphor operates rhetorically both as a perverse confession and as an unimpeachable justification—he is guilty, true, of losing himself in the process, but, after all, this was the affliction of the greatest artist of the Renaissance as well. And this same affliction would become the basis of an emphatic and public accusation—Eisenstein in the ivory tower—in 1935. As we have seen Eisenstein tell his critics, his protracted incapability of completing a project was rather to be seen as a necessary condition of the creative engine propelling the forward motion of his cinematic activity. The thought that this tension may work as a sort of creative dialectic, by which the discoveries and complications of the one can be tested, accepted, or even rejected by the practical implementations of the other, becomes a compelling model for a practice of cinema in which the academic and the actual are given equal priority. The Davincian danger, "the sidelong glance," results only in stagnation when the inquisitive gaze is indulged totally

at the expense of its productive counterpart—praxis. This accounts for cases in which, as Eisenstein would later write, having "worked out the principle, I lose interest in its application!"[49]

And on the other hand, Eisenstein would later write in *Method* at length on the stylistic manifestation of the unfinished, of Van Gogh's brushstroke as providing a "marvelous sense of the 'coming into being' of forms . . . a peculiar residue within the work itself of the creator's own gestural motion, an idiosyncratic, dynamic self-portrait of the artist's gesticulation" as accurate as any literal self-portrait.[50] These observations precede a brief analysis of the convergence of diffuseness and definition in the writing of James Joyce and in the sculptural works of both Michelangelo and Rodin. According to Eisenstein, Michelangelo's works are "a pure revelation. Especially those [works] in which the trace of the chisel's path is left behind deliberately on the surface as it gives birth to these living forms from out of the stillness of stone nothingness."[51] And here he compares this "unfinished textural quality" of Michelangelo—a quality that was the product of historical necessity, the works were literally left unfinished because of the artist's biographical circumstances—and the stylistic choice of Rodin to leave this trace of the chisel in the work intentionally. He concludes that the "partially finished final form" of both sculptors is key to the work's aesthetic power: "However, the effect, if different in force, is undoubtedly identical in nature. And the crushing sensual strength of Michelangelo's incomplete statues of the slaves from the gardens of Boboli (1519), who 'rise up out of the stone,' just as the first people traditionally arose from the dust, or the gently lyrical beings of Rodin, airy, like a fleeting pulsation by which the vivified stone seems to thaw. These are, both in equal measure, the stone image of the transition from the diffuse and undefined into the differentiated and defined."[52] This thought, then, points back to the idea of Eisenstein's finished and unfinished work—that the consideration of these unfinished pieces can provide the effect of viewing within a work the crucial moment of its coming into being, the creation of form from diffuseness.

Such tension between that which is complete and that which is still potential and undefined is also the basis for Eisenstein's articulation in *Method* of the odd and the even, as we have already seen, as an entrée into Eastern models of dialectical thinking, the bifurcation of the singular—yin and yang, each part containing and determining the other. In a section of his *Memoirs*, also with the provisional title "The Bifurcation of

the Singular," Eisenstein connects this to the idea of division as a primary figure in Judeo-Christian cosmogony—that Jehovah divided the lightness from the darkness, the water from the dry land, Eve from out of Adam.[53] The articulation of form in this instance becomes the most basic figure of creation—in which diffuseness and form exist simultaneously at the moment in which they are divided. The incomplete works, counted on the same level as the complete, exist simultaneously and in dialectical relation to them, so that these unrealized but necessary counterparts become cinematic objects unto themselves, instances of an idea caught exactly between the diffuse and the defined.

To Conjugate Chaos

In this discussion of Eisenstein and the unrealized cinema project, three related metaphors of creativity have illuminated the difficulty and the value of analyzing the unrealized film: Shklovsky's evocation of unborn children (they have no birthdate, no horoscope, and thus may have only enigmatic fates); Babel's joke about screenwriting (that it is like calling for the midwife on the wedding night); and Eisenstein's own primal scene of creativity (the furtive glance into the bedroom at the "holy" moment). All three of these figures are sexual in nature, (pro)creation operating as both setup and punchline. As metaphors, they signal a crisis in either conception or delivery, the elusiveness of an awaited, consummating moment. They stage the dilemma experienced by those attempting to encounter the unrealized film: How can a film that was never made be analyzed *as* film? How can preproduction material be properly judged if it must always point somewhere outside itself? And how can the imaginative process be investigated if the very gaze of curiosity itself, as Eisenstein implies, tends to operate as a kind of coitus interruptus?

These are difficult questions to answer, but Eisenstein's analysis of his own cinema practice may bring at least some clarity. In 1943, preparing for the publication of the *Ivan the Terrible* screenplay, the very experienced filmmaker described the inception of a film project:

> There is a single process, which is inevitably always just like this—suddenly, simultaneously, instantaneously—it begins at every end, from every side. This is the process of the film's conception. The finished film consists of an incomparable assembly of the most varied means of expression and influence. . . . All is governed by a

> single law, and the seeming chaos of incommensurability in the individual domains and dimensions is conjugated into a single integrated whole. But how does this future whole come about when one comes to the task of embodying the all-important theme? . . . One scene you see as a living occurrence from life, another you act out, the third you hear, the fourth you see within the frame, the fifth you sense as a system of montage collisions, the sixth is a chaos of colored spots. And on scraps of paper appear here a shred of dialogue, there a plan for the arrangement of characters in a field, here "instructions for the set designer" regarding the delicate edges of a vaulted ceiling, or . . . "to the director" about the rhythm of a still-unwritten scene, or "thoughts for the composer." . . . But then, all of a sudden, throwing out all words and outlines, the scraps of paper begin to fill up feverishly with drawings.[54]

Here we see the simultaneity of multiple forms, the passage of one type of film-imaginative material into another. Of particular emphasis are notes of various kinds, script materials (here as dialogue and blocking), and drawings—all things that can be, and have been, gratefully, preserved as archival documents. These materials, created in the fever of conception, were meant to both fix and advance the film idea. The notes, script material, and drawings were each in their way meant to spark the thoughts and senses of the project's participants; they also, to the extent they have been preserved, become the material on which scholars of the unrealized film must sustain themselves. In both cases, they act as inducements toward further imagination of the film. Since such objects are also the focus of this book, I have, for the sake of clarity, outlined them as three provisional categories below and given each a brief conceptual description and a sense of how they will be used to read the six unrealized Eisenstein films that constitute the remainder of this book. These are the processes that will be peered into, the frames through which I read the filmmaker's imaginary cinema. These documents consist of occasional writings, specific thematic and conceptual engagements with cinema ideas (related to a specific film or a complex of ideas that it touches), brief reminders or aphorisms, diaristic recordings, and much else. The notes may be scattered, they may be informally condensed in dedicated notebooks or formally collected in typed documents, they may even appear as marginalia in other documents. Such notes may be addressed to collaborators (actors, set designers, etc.), but in the case of the notes found in Eisenstein's archive, they are almost

always notations for himself—writing in which he records his ideas, connections, and conclusions with a more or less observable intention of producing a resource of sorts for later stages of production.

In her recent monograph on Eisenstein's 1927–28 notes for the *Capital* project, Elena Vogman invokes the concept of *hypomnemata* (*hupomnēmata*), which Michel Foucault employs in his analysis of Plato's *Phaedrus* and the techniques of personal writing in antiquity. Foucault applies this term to a broad range of notation practices of Plato's day but emphasizes the "individual notebooks serving as memoranda. . . . Into [which] one entered quotations, fragments of works, examples, and actions. . . . They constituted a material memory of things read, heard, or thought, thus offering these as an accumulated treasure for rereading and later meditation."[55] Vogman rightly emphasizes the heterogeneous nature of the writings that Foucault describes, insinuating in them a montage tendency that clearly affiliates them with preproduction cinema practices; she also points out, as does Foucault, that such writings were meant as "material for producing future texts." This may be understood to function in just the same way that preproduction materials of cinema are oriented toward the eventual production of a full cinematic text. Vogman writes, "In this way Eisenstein's labile constellations can be understood as aides-mémoires, that is, as 'memory aides' in the broadest sense of the term."[56] Thinking of Eisenstein's notes in this light is particularly productive since it allows the documents to be both ends in themselves and inherently productive of new ideas and images; they are objects inclined toward transformation.

If, as in Eisenstein's earlier statement, the accumulation of various types of notation in a film's inception is defined by a kind of simultaneity and instantaneousness, such a synchronic presence remains essential for a full reception of these objects. Eisenstein's notes often benefit from being read with a reasonable disregard for sequentiality—whether for their time of composition or their supposed connection to any point within a future film's running time—allowing the ideas and images to exist in a nonhierarchic and unbounded imaginary space. This was, in part, the goal of Eisenstein's other experiments in textual simultaneity, one of the major structural and aesthetic themes, especially, of his later theoretical works. He makes the value of this explicit in a well-known August 1929 diary entry on the subject:

> This bouquet of notes should in no way be examined and perceived in a sequential order. I would want a simultaneity of perception

> of all of them at once since, in the end they are all just a series of sectors occupying different areas surrounding one general point of view that determines them all—a method. On the other hand, I would want to establish in a purely spatial sense the possibility for each note to mutually correspond with every other one—for one to merge into the other and back. From one to another through mutual linkages. The mutual action of one in relation to another. This kind of simultaneous and mutual interpenetration of notes could be fulfilled by a book in the shape of . . . a sphere![57]

The imagined spherical book then would allow all the concepts it contained to correlate at any given moment with any other of its concepts. Though this three-dimensional vision of the text was quixotic, it nevertheless formed the basis of the rather fragmentary nature of the director's later (unfinished) theoretical texts such as *Method*, the manuscript of which is not a traditionally unified document, but rather an extensive series of folders containing thematically related discourses written on loose sheets of paper. The sheets and the folders could be arranged and reconfigured by the author in the same way that he hoped a reader might do in encountering the text. Eisenstein's notes for his unrealized films are extensive, disparate, often unfocused, and always operate with a conceptual and visual surplus to the films they were meant to precede. Bearing Eisenstein's spherical intentions in mind allows the reader to follow these notes more productively into the imaginary space of cinema production.

A step further into form than the scattered notes of the previous category, script materials represent the beginning of a process in which the imagined film is fit into a quasiliterary format meant explicitly to be read by collaborators on the future film. Here we may include a variety of materials: the treatment (or libretto), the screenplay (or scenario), the director's script (or shooting script), the shot list (or montage list), among others—each of which may exist as drafts, in finalized form, or as amended versions.[58] In his 1929 essay "The Form of the Script," Eisenstein uses the filmscript as an instance to describe the transformative mechanism of the filmmaking process: "the screenplay, in its essence, is not a formalization of the material, but a stage in the conditioning of the material on the path between the temperamental conception of the chosen theme and its optical incarnation."[59] The process proposed is multiform: material must repeatedly leap into successively new levels of incarnation, through a sequence of stages, as it

is conditioned toward a final form. He explores this mutation of forms through a series of metaphors: from a "shorthand of an emotional surge" to a "heap of visual images"; from "a boot tree" that holds a shoe's shape until the "living foot" replaces it; from a corked "bottle" to the foaming wine that bursts from it. These analogies culminate in the somewhat less figurative designation of the screenplay as a "cipher," a communicative form that allows a transmission of intangible thought and emotion ("temperament") between participants in the film's creation. Because the screenplay is a written form, it depends on literary technique to achieve its end; the author "uses his own means to imprint within the script the rhythm of his conception. The director comes along and translates the rhythm of this conception into his own language, into film language; he finds the cinematic equivalent of the literary utterance."[60] Script materials, then, are tools composed toward the imagination of a film by those who read them; in addition to directors, this may include officials, producers, designers, actors, and so on. They operate as a communication between the conceiver's imagination and the imagination of the reader.[61]

For Eisenstein, it is crucial that the screenplay be not merely an elaboration of specific on-set instructions—where to place the camera and what to put in front of it—but rather an autonomous form, a vital expression that is in itself productive and powerful. Otherwise, there is no "animation" in the process; it is a dead indexing of a static image. By this logic, the script materials that appear in the archive of Eisenstein's unrealized films may be seen as a collection of bottles, corks, and boot trees, of shorthand notes—placeholders, yes, but ones charged with the task of carrying the force of the filmmaker's imagination, and, ideally, passing on that same imagination to be transformed in those who encounter them. Eisenstein's approach to this preliminary stage of film production prefigures similar views held by other filmmakers of the later twentieth century. For example, Robert Bresson, who puts this mutable process in terms of mortality and resurrection: "My movie is born first in my head, dies on paper; is resuscitated by the living persons and real objects I use, which are killed on film but, placed in a certain order and projected on to a screen, come to life again like flowers in water."[62] Or Pier Paolo Pasolini, closer perhaps to Eisenstein's formulation, who places less emphasis on a possible continuity or recovery in such "resuscitation" of forms but rather highlights the crisis inherent in such leaps between production stages wherein materials (such as the screenplay) are seen as autonomous, "a work complete and

finished in itself" that nevertheless "expresses meanings of a 'structure in movement,' that is, of 'a structure endowed with the will to become another structure.'"[63] Both of these filmmakers articulate, as does Eisenstein, the movement of otherwise incompatible media forms as they participate in a segmented process of transformation. Both suggest that a given preproduction form—in this case the screenplay—as it shifts toward the next successive form, communicates something vital and oriented toward an imagined final form.

As we will see in chapter 3, Eisenstein was acutely aware of the mechanisms of literary form that the screenplay necessarily must trade in, and he wrote throughout his career about cinema's relation to literature—thus his 1929 emphasis on the film idea's necessary metamorphosis from literary into optical material is paramount. But it should be emphasized too that the particulars of the "literary" here are not essential to the general mechanism; what is most vital is simply the movement from one conception to another, from one stage to another of the imaginary film's "conditioning" toward actual cinema. The leap from screenplay to filmed image is perhaps the most obvious model of this process, but by applying the same logic to other common documents of the cinema-production process we may see a very similar model of communication in action. This view of the screenplay and related materials as a prime participant in this staged, mutable, and conceptually revelatory cinema process is a vital key toward understanding the director's unrealized films.

That Eisenstein drew compulsively and constantly has been well documented by his contemporaries.[64] Although drawing appears to have been one of the dominant modes with which Eisenstein—especially in the last two decades of his life—engaged with and responded to the world at large, the director's graphic employment of pencil and paper as a generative and expressive technique was a major part of his cinema practice. The language he used to describe his drawings' relation to his films clearly corresponds with his larger view of the cinema-imagination process: "The most important thing is to have a vision. The second is to capture it."[65] And elsewhere: "The author sees with his mind's eye some image, an emotional embodiment of his theme. His task is to reduce that image to two or three *partial representations* whose combination or juxtaposition shall evoke in the consciousness and feelings of the spectator the same generalized initial image which haunted the author's imagination."[66] Like the screenplay, the drawing is meant to communicate, not always literally, but rather emotionally,

and in an intensely distilled form, the thing that one "sees and feels" as part of the initial vision of the film; the drawing is meant to provoke the imagination of the one who encounters it.

Eisenstein felt his drawings flow out of him almost as part of a fever, alternating with his verbal notations in the quest to record the film idea's essence (the hand that scribbles down notes suddenly drops the pen, takes up the pencil to swiftly sketch out a form, then grabs the pen again to record a bit of dialogue). Indeed, the speed with which he executed drawings is a vital factor in their relevance. Annette Michelson has described the energy and directness of the director's drawings as "fulfillment of an insistent desire for a form of production that would provide an alternative to that most strongly mediated form of all: filmmaking."[67] The drawings he makes in preparation for future films ought to be looked at in this sense; they are less carriers of total information than they are relics of an impression. They are less frequently mockups or storyboards than they are lightning condensations of vital, telling details: the relationship between a costume and a body, the implied movement of a limb, the hint of a landscape in a line.

For Eisenstein, it was important that his drawings not be read as strictly analogous to other media forms, that they not be seen as "illustrations for the screenplay," and that sometimes in their attempt to capture the essence of the future film, "they will have nothing visibly in common" with the future scene they inform; thus, while they distill, they are also of a surplus.[68] The drawings may treat material that falls far outside the future film's purview, but they might also imagine scenes, as in the preparatory materials for films like *Glass House* and *MMM*, which appear to be impossible for a filmmaker to stage. Some drawings seem to operate in obedience to the four edges of the film frame, others blatantly surge beyond the frame or operate in total ignorance of it. To the extent then that the drawings explore a sort of unfilmable image, we can read them as a generative activity more interested in the production of a *thematic* imagination than in specific production of film content. In any case, as with Eisenstein's various notes and script materials, the key mechanism associated with the drawings toward his imagined films is transformation. While it might be tempting to read the drawings, because of their pictorial substance, as the nonmoving counterpart of the cinema image, a prefabricated film still, this would be to ignore their potential dynamic force in the process of development. Of course, some of the archival remnants of Eisenstein's

unrealized projects feature far more graphic work than others, but as Naum Kleiman has written, "all of Eisenstein's films were born as transfigurations of his graphic works."[69]

"As if You Too Were an Author"

Perhaps reasonably, none of these artifacts of a film's preliminary stages, taken in isolation, has ever convincingly been called "a film," nor has any been made to stand in for the final film to which it points in a wholly satisfactory way. And yet the presence of some part of that final film in the fabric of each discrete stage, and the progression from one to another, the dynamic movement toward that final film image, is inevitably one of the surest markers of cinema. In Eisenstein's case, these successions of forms, gestures, and ideas verging into one another appear as a totally native aspect of his creative and intellectual practice. All the work that Eisenstein developed in his career—his film material, critical essays, speeches, film-school lectures—tended to bear this unmistakable property: an indifference to the putative line between draft and completed work, a development through stages, work seemingly ever poised for transformation. Especially in the context of the film production process and its cascade of preproduction stages, this dialectical unpreparedness is clear evidence of the primacy of imaginary labor (that which, ultimately, is not meant for display) within the practice of cinema. By considering all preproduction materials to be drafts in this sense (drafts for one another, drafts of the final and imagined film), we may perhaps see them more clearly as specific tools, most often deployed in sequence, toward the catalyzation of a specific type of imagination, toward an imagined film within the minds of those laborers engaged in the process of filmmaking. The process becomes even more compelling when the communication between stages of development is meant as an inducement of *one's own* imagination. This is the phenomenon of the closed circuit that may be observed when notes or scripts or drawings are made—as they regularly were in Eisenstein's case—for oneself, when the composer is perhaps both the originator of the film idea and the overseer of its further development; the author of treatment, the screenwriter, director, and designer all in one person. Many of Eisenstein's unrealized film projects may be followed specifically in this direction, moving through various forms of notation in which author and intended audience seem to be (mostly) one and the same.

Each of the unfinished projects of this study operate as demonstrations of such techniques of imagination, intended both as notation and inducement to move the material of the yet-to-be realized film from one stage to another, toward its final incarnation. In this work, I assume all the archival remnants of the unfinished Eisenstein projects—those more private documents (notebooks, sketches, marginalia) along with their more public counterparts (formal screenplays, shooting scripts, various memoranda)—to be characteristic parts that can make possible not a literal reconstruction, but an imaginary projection of their absent whole. Since I could have no intention of *actually* reconstructing Eisenstein's incomplete works, I proceed in my descriptive analysis of these selected film projects from the rhetorical position that these imaginary films do, to some extent, exist. Indeed, it is inevitable that in the process of recounting the details of these preproduction materials—once active participants in a production system but now constituents of an archive—a vivifying language develops in which the description serves to further "cinematize" the content of written or graphic texts that are oriented toward becoming moving image. In this sense, even the descriptions I make here act as translations between forms. And so, by following the material's movement between forms, the contemporary observer is able not only to track the process of cinema's transformative conditioning through its various stages but also to participate in the imagination of that unrealized film.

Whether in some expected capacity in the developing chain of film production (as collaborator or executive) or outside of this, from a perspective of historical distance (as the researcher or reader), the unrealized demands of the observer an active engagement in the determination of both form and meaning. We are induced toward participation in the creative process, and this is possibly the most compelling aspect of the unfinished work—its "open[ness] to the infinite interpretive field of the imagination," as Linda Nochlin has written.[70] As observers and readers, our relation to the unrealized film is necessarily active, requiring the same faculties of imagination that the filmmaker employed, or attempted to employ. It is a mode very similar to the reading style described by Eisenstein's near-exact contemporary Andrei Platonov in his 1936 story "Among Animals and Plants." Platonov describes the protagonist of this story, the railroad switchman Fyodorov, who "choose[s] pages at random—now page 50, now page 214. And although every book is interesting, reading this way makes it even better, and still more interesting, because you have to imagine for yourself everything

you have skipped, and you have to compose anew passages that don't make sense or are badly written, just as if you too are an author."[71]

The resonance here with Eisenstein's spherical book and the sort of reading it was to produce is clear: the gaps inherent between various fragments of text allow the reader a kind of combinatory autonomy, an opportunity to imagine within the open space of the not-fully-determined work something of its total shape. The chapters that follow will investigate the ways in which the texts of Eisenstein's unrealized films support such imagining.

Part I

Ideal/Material

Glass House, a satirical fantasy to be set in a high-rise building made entirely of glass, and *Capital*, Eisenstein's cinema adaptation of Karl Marx's treatise on political economy, are two of the director's more notorious unrealized projects. Though neither film was ever made, productive ripples of inspiration have emanated from both, giving them something of an alternate life in the production of other artists and thinkers. Engagements with the former project and its revolutionary approach to material and optics appear at a steady pace in contemporary works of experimental film, sculpture, and conceptual art.[1] The latter project has also come to radiate an almost legendary attraction; figures as diverse as Georges Bataille, Guy Debord, and Alexander Kluge have been variously provoked by its concept, often despite a conspicuous scarcity of concrete information about it.[2] They are both truly *ideas for films*—discrete and radical impulses toward cinema, each idealistically seeking to remake the formal signifying standards of the medium, with neither project ever approaching real coherence as a workable concept. In Eisenstein's audacious imagining of these two films, we may observe a tension rising between form and content as he attempts to bend the complexities of the material world toward their representation. In this pursuit, we see him approach the limits of the achievable. The form of these projects speaks of a utopia: a new, more

pure, more potent language of cinema. Their content speaks of dystopia: the brutality of rampant capitalism, the abuse of class privilege, the glaring absence of struggle. Somewhere between these polarities the projects are born, blossom, and then recede from view.

The first of these ideas, that which would lead to the plans for *Glass House*, occurred to Eisenstein during his April 1926 visit to Berlin for the scheduled German public premiere of *Battleship Potemkin*.[3] The moment of inspiration must have felt momentous for Eisenstein: he tells us the name of the hotel (Hessler) and the room number (73) he occupied when the project's defining image first came to him. It would take nearly a year before he committed the idea to the pages of his work notebook; the first mention of it dates from 13 January 1927. There, in that notebook, in a relatively tidy hand, Eisenstein recalls the earlier inspiration in Berlin and states the twin purposes he had devised for the film: to satirize the detachment of capitalist life in America and—possibly—to make that film *in* America.[4] The idea for *Glass House* seems to arrive on the page as a kind of liberation from immediate context: whether more or less oriented toward America, the project was born in Western Europe and was distinctly westward facing—and unlike in his previous features, here there is no addressing Russian daily life and culture, Russian or revolutionary history, or the political actualities of the Soviet 1920s.[5]

As Eisenstein's occasional notes on the film gradually build momentum throughout 1927, they reach a crescendo in an entry of 18 September 1927, when, as prelude to a flood of visual ideas, Eisenstein exclaims, "All, all, all attention to *Glass House*!"[6] At this point, the filming of *October* had just been completed and the slow process of its editing begun; the *Glass House* project was now the beneficiary of the director's newly available creative energies.

How interesting and surprising then, that, not even a month later, this superlative declaration of concentration on a single project would be interrupted by a similarly terse proclamation of focus on an entirely different, second project. On 12 October 1927, Eisenstein wrote on a scrap of paper, later glued into his work diary, "It has been decided: we are going to stage *Capital* based on K. Marx's scenario—this is the only formal way out."[7] His notes then begin to pivot toward this new idea, the nebulous, quixotic premise of which—how might one go about *filming* Marx's critique of political economy?—seems to have suddenly offered itself to the director as a concrete opportunity to broach new areas of film form. And it urgently required his attention.

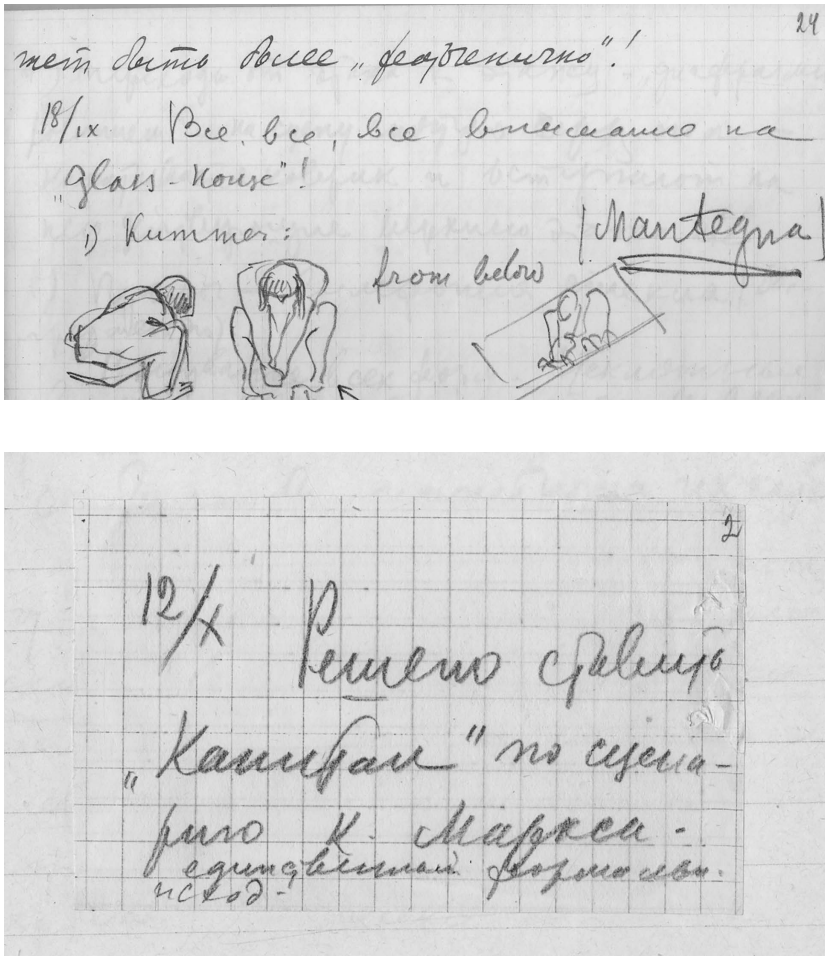


Figure 3.1. Eisenstein's written commitment to pursue *Glass House* and his similar commitment to pursue *Capital*. RGALI, 1923-2-1104, 24, and 1923-2-1105, 2–3. Used with permission.

Over the next seven months, until April 1928, Eisenstein's working notebooks are riddled with thoughts on *both* of these projects, each of which had blazed with obvious initial fascination for the director. In this section of the book, I will analyze *Glass House* and *Capital* together, each one in light of the other, observing their inextricable connection. Together they demonstrate Eisenstein's self-consciously dialectical method of film practice: a pair of film ideas deployed in pursuit of parallel aims, though approaching their target from markedly different angles, each seeking a formal synthesis that would consume former

technique. As two conceptually radical, nearly quixotic unrealized projects dreamt up by a filmmaker at the height of his creative powers, both can be read as idealistic attempts to drastically reconceive the pictorial and rhetorical potential of cinema. They are films scribbled down in notebooks, cinematic ideas that never advanced to screenplay drafts, let alone to stages of real production. And yet, in the absence of actual film, what remains of their conceptual genesis is strikingly productive: a wealth of images, ideas, correlations, and signifying possibility all defined by an intense visualization and theoretical development. As instances of imaginary cinema, they demonstrate the power of pen and paper, of the notebook—a fund of occasional graphic and practical ideas—toward the imagination of cinema.

What were the similarities that allowed Eisenstein to work on the imagining of *Glass House* and *Capital* simultaneously? Their two lines of inquiry are mostly delineated in his work notes, but there are occasional passages where the task of discerning which of the two films the director might be imagining at a given point becomes rather difficult. Notes that seem, for example, to be roughing out possible studio shots for *Capital* veer suddenly toward musings on glass and skyscrapers. These two striking new film ideas were growing in a state of interpenetration and crosspollination, a condition demonstrated in the forty-six-page working notebook for *Capital* kept by Eisenstein's assistant Grigori Alexandrov. There, in the late autumn of 1927, while working with Eisenstein on the montage of *October*, Alexandrov gathered material and recorded ideas (presumably dictated by the director) for the evolving project. The notebook features the label **CAPITAL** in bold, block Cyrillic letters, but its tenth through twelfth pages consist of a series of very important ideas—for example, the effect of bullets and blood on glass's transparency—that all belong to the *Glass House* project.[8] Such bleed-over continues throughout the duration of these projects' developments—demonstrating that, for Eisenstein, there was no imagining the one without the other, and suggesting that the best reading of these projects is one that treats them in tandem.

Both projects also notably reflect a preoccupation with material culture and the hyperbolic materiality of capitalist reality. There is a political affinity between them that departs from Eisenstein's previous works, which, to this point, had all dealt with the revolutionary processes of socialism's rise and its struggle with late imperial capitalism. Both *Capital* and *Glass House* locate themselves in obscure or far-off worlds determined by capitalism and occupy a place far from contemporary Soviet

social reality. Their revolutionary spirit is conceptual, not historical. We see in the *Glass House* notes a sustained exploration of how one material substance can be used as a unit of construction (a residential high-rise built entirely of glass), an emblem of the tension between public and private (everything is visible; nothing is seen), and an enforcer of social and economic difference (residents of different classes encounter one another but cannot penetrate the barrier between them). In the case of *Capital*, Eisenstein's notes use the material trappings of daily life as the impetus for tracing the visible movement of products and currency through global pathways of production, distribution, and hierarchy. And here too this movement of commodity becomes the raw aesthetic material from which individual sequences are imagined. In both projects, the material world is staged as the organizing force, the determinant of dramatic action: in *Glass House*, characters come and go, appearing briefly in rhetorically pointed scenes, connected only by the glass that houses them all; in *Capital*, Eisenstein offers almost no characters, only functional human subjects employed as props to push forward the economic processes addressed in the theses of Marx's text. Whereas *Capital* seeks to penetrate the sources of material culture, following raw materials from their geological emergence to their employment and manipulation in bourgeois capitalist reality, *Glass House* uses glass as a boundless material entity without origin: it surrounds everything in sight, determining every aspect of daily life. *Capital*'s object is the *origin* of material, *Glass House*'s its *endpoint*.

"I Devour . . . My Very Own Child"

That these conceptually and physically ambitious sibling projects should have arisen when they did—in the wake of *Potemkin* and during the postproduction of *October*—is anything but surprising. After *Potemkin*'s premiere at the end of 1925, and after some minor administrative and censorial setbacks, the film had quickly grown into a sensation unmatched by anything before it in Russian cinema. Indeed, over the next year, the film brought international fame and immense domestic acclaim to the twenty-eight-year-old director. This triumph propelled Eisenstein into a remarkably fertile creative period between 1926 and 1928, during which he attempted a self-enforced reformulation of a filmmaking method only just established in his first two films. In the volumes of work notes that he produced around this practical and theoretical labor, he explicitly and thoroughly pursues a program to

expand, contend with, and eclipse what he had already achieved in his nascent body of work.

For Eisenstein, *Potemkin*'s effectiveness had more or less proven the validity of the theoretical models that had undergirded his previous output, and further work along these particular lines of inquiry would merely have provided variations of the same.[9] Accordingly, in all his new undertakings of the time, the director's approach was one of radical exploration—a tendency revealed in his notes, lectures, essays, and most evidently in the form of his next two film projects. *The General Line* (begun in May 1926 and completed in late 1928, after extended pauses in production) and *October* (begun during a break from *The General Line* in November 1926 and completed in March 1928) provided Eisenstein a space for formal investigations that brought him steps closer to the desired revolution in the medium's potential. What these films contributed to this radical methodology is plain. In *The General Line*, the innovation was structural: a synchronic treatment of divergent and interpenetrating temporalities (the simultaneity of social structures old and new in the Russian countryside) along with the development of a large-scale montage technique that Eisenstein would later term *overtonal*.[10] The making of *October*—and, in particular, the editing of a handful of its sequences—yielded a series of new semantic potentials that Eisenstein harnessed, famously, under the terms *intellectual montage* or *intellectual attraction*. The director believed he had uncovered a potential for cinema to operate as a medium of theoretical discourse through which dialectical analysis could take place—a film language in which "the abstract *word* . . . leads to a concrete *concept*."[11] Described otherwise, Eisenstein's sense was that the collision of form, composition, and motion employed dramatically and semantically through montage could also be made to carry distinct theses—political or otherwise—that would lead the viewers' minds through the movements of a dialectical logic and that could, in the best circumstances, lead audiences to new stages of synthesized knowledge. The generative value of these projects' innovations in these projects was unmistakable for Eisenstein; major questions of cinema's production and manipulation of chronologies and cognition were now clearer. In a diary entry of 31 January 1928, anticipating the release of the first of these films, he writes, "With *October*, I devour, like Saturn, my very own child—the *Battleship*."[12]

Despite how much *October* and *The General Line* may have forged the pathway into this reconstitution of film method, they still only hinted at the possibilities of a new film discourse. Eisenstein considered the

intellectual montage passages of *October*, for example, to be but a "two-dimensional solution," since all but a few of the film's sequences remained highly narrative; he felt that although he had found the formal levers to overturn his method, he was merely "groping after" principles that had yet to be properly and thoroughly employed.[13] If *October* and *The General Line* may be seen as efforts toward the practical implementation of the method of intellectual film, *Glass House* and *Capital* should be seen as the more utopian line of this inquiry. Eisenstein makes it clear in his diaries that he viewed *Capital* and *Glass House* as his opportunity to employ this new method in a purer form. Thus, intellectual montage was to have become *the* organizing principle of the *Capital* film, and its constructive premise was to have been the full-scale "deanecdotalization" of the plot—the purging of any reliance on narrative.[14] And with *Glass House*, Eisenstein imagined, in relation to the innovations of these other projects, a complete reorientation of the film frame: "What we must do [in *Glass House*] with the frame is the same as we are doing in the construction of sections of *October* and within the entire structure of *Capital*."[15]

The Materialist Soul

The premises of these two films, their reliance on Marxian philosophies of political economy, must certainly have presupposed a fluency and commitment to historical materialism on the part of their director. The importance of dialectical thought in Eisenstein's key theoretical formulation of the early part of the decade—the montage of attractions and its application in cinema—is unmistakable. In the early essays where this concept is developed, and indeed beyond them, Eisenstein's logic tends to follow the general triadic pattern (thesis, antithesis, synthesis) of the dialectic as it analyzes and proposes models for understanding how meaning is created through the progressive collision of discrete montage elements. Beyond the logic of dialectic, his 1925 essay "The Problem of the Materialist Approach to Form," demonstrates Eisenstein's sensitivity to the question of form and content as it relates to historical materialism. The essay argues that the standard by which a work of art might be judged revolutionary is the degree to which its form is properly determined by the *material* that it considers. At this time, the only film Eisenstein had completed was *Strike*, and he shows how it eschews any "generally accepted dramaturgical laws" in favor of a form—itself even more revolutionary than its accompanying content—that is "the product of correctly ascertained technical methods" that allowed for a

new relationship "to objects and phenomena."[16] As evidence of his success in applying this method to *Strike*, he cites Mikhail Koltsov's review of the film in *Pravda*, where its treatment of historical-revolutionary subject matter was judged to be "correct, in terms of materialism" and even "Bolshevik" in its approach.[17] Revolutionary content here motivates revolutionary form—in other words, the method by which the film makes meaning is determined by the material it takes as its subject. In the case of *Strike*, the material had been that of heavy industry, manufacturing, and mass labor—phenomena that "know no inviolable rules other than [their] final aim."[18] Eisenstein's claim is that the film presents this material in a cinematic language that leads viewers to read images through visual devices that promote a materialist attitude toward both objects of production and the processes (labor, manufacture) by which they are brought about—a drastic change in *things themselves* and the way in which these things are *shown*.[19] Eisenstein's theoretical concept of material is operative on both sides of the film screen. As he had argued in the 1924 essay, "The Montage of Film Attractions," the pliable material of the viewer must be considered in equal proportion to that of the material of depiction, indeed, that in film, as in theater, "the fundamental material is the viewer and . . . the entire project is the reorientation of that viewer in the desired direction by means of a series of calculated pressures on its psyche."[20] Here the concern over the form of the work of revolutionary cinema is particularly acute—it must correspond not only to a new set of materialist objects and processes but also to the construction of a revolutionary viewing subject with proper ideological tendencies.[21]

A direct line runs between this period of Eisenstein's theoretical and practical endeavors in historical materialism and the period, two to three years later, in which the *Capital* and *Glass House* projects were developed. His diary entries of that later period are frank about the role of materialism. In an entry of 3 January 1928, after returning from a discussion held in the arts division of Glavnauka, where art and literary critic Osip Beskin had claimed that all directors were united in their acknowledgment of the platform of "constructive realism," Eisenstein writes, "I do not believe naturalism, or realism, or etc. unites us. We have but one ultimate determinant—*materialism*."[22] The task, predicated on this materialism, of the concurrently developing *Glass House* and *Capital* was to have been, as Annette Michelson has suggested of the latter film, the "unpack[ing] and integrat[ion] into formal discourse" of the "economic premises of class struggle."[23] In some places, Marxian principles

are meant to take a straightforward, tactile path to the screen. For example, an intended result of one of *Capital*'s chapters was the demonstration of the "materialist understanding of 'the soul'";[24] and, as we shall see later, *Glass House*, which was conceived as a way to present "a series of Marxist theses," may be read as an extended examination of a natural and societal commodity (glass) both determining and determined by its historical epoch.[25]

Elsewhere, Eisenstein's notes take on a more complicated—if idiosyncratic—approach to historical materialism, in which the progression of historical socioeconomic development is compressed into a simultaneous contemporaneity. As we have seen, this intention to treat divergent temporalities and stages of development in a single time-space was something Eisenstein had first attempted with the simultaneous portrayal of multiple stages of social development in *The General Line*. About the *Capital* project, he writes, "In regard to 'historical materialism' and its orientation toward the current day (in *Capital*) I need to find contemporary equivalents for the moments of rupture in past epochs" and "*Capital* obliges us to soak up and . . . deploy historical materialism from different stages of development onto contemporary material."[26] To answer this impulse, he envisions major historical figures of territorial imperialism such as Cortés and Pizarro costumed in the guises of door-to-door salesmen who are looking to expand the limits of a flooded market—commercial expansion becomes equivalent with colonization. This device, casting the dialectical movement of history onto the present day, was meant to be worked out in spatiotemporal terms: "Replace time with space. From the Eskimo to the skyscraper and not from the stone age to the present day."[27] Eisenstein was interested not only in incongruous travesties of time but also in organic objects that demonstrated the simultaneous presence of past and present. He brainstorms a farcical series of images of clergy and particularly of their costumes, which, he observes, are even to this day rigidly medieval, "just as all their teachings are."[28] He insists again here, not on the succession of images, but rather on their copresence—that they should be shown "*durcheinander*," as a palimpsest of mutually penetrating phenomena that emphasizes stasis *through* change.

Genuine, Pure Cinema

Glass House and *Capital* represent attempts to establish a radically new cinematic structure, each with a peculiar and idealized signifying

language motivated by the particulars of the materials they consider. The innovations in cinematic discourse were meant to correspond not only to the deeper material nature of the film medium itself (its inherent tendency toward conflict and juxtaposition, the rhetoric of the frame, the logical and emotional perspective of the camera) but also to the political reality and ideological requirements of an aggressively developing socialist society—all of this constituted what Eisenstein considered a "genuine, pure cinema."[29] Some questions become paramount. First, how might the foundations of historical materialism take a fundamentally aesthetic form? And then, how can the economic processes at stake be represented in all their complexity and movement? And, most important, how can ideology—Marxist or otherwise—be *enacted* through film?

More than anything else, the issue was one of distilling complex concepts into concise, essentially cinematic images. Eisenstein viewed this task as akin to the way in which the complexity of a political position can be distilled, powerfully and clearly, to the simple letters in the words of a slogan placed on a picket or banner—a parallel he proposed in his unfinished 1928 essay "IA-28."[30] The power of the political slogan (*lozung*) to move in eloquent condensation from "concept to verbal couplet," from complexity to a readably tendentious sign, seemed to the filmmaker a key to his nascent method. Its cinematic application is similar: given concepts are distilled into discrete units of ideologically oriented cinematic content, a charged idea, a sign easily readable by and persuasive to an audience. These units of conceptual compositional material could then be combined to develop a rhetorical discourse in combination with other, similar cinema-slogans while still resisting traditional concepts of narrative—the closest the notes come to imparting any literary or dramatic value is the use of the term *chapter* (*glava*). The careful arrangement of such slogans would then allow the new intellectual cinema to move away from what Eisenstein considered to be a growing unhealthy "fetishization" of material objects and phenomena as such, and toward "*a conclusion* based on the phenomenon and a *judgment* based on the material, all made concrete in completed *concepts*."[31] In other words, for Eisenstein, an extreme focus on the material world was not enough—all material needed to be processed through a clear political tendency. The aphorism appears in his diary at this time: "Down with the aestheticization of *material*—give us the concretization of the *slogan*!"[32] Theodore Dreiser, after meeting Eisenstein in Moscow

in 1928, recalled that the director had expressed his desire for condensed rhetorical clarity in his films by saying that he wanted to make them operate "like a speech."[33] This type of direct expression of political tendency seems to be interchangeably referred to at different moments of Eisenstein's published and unpublished writings as "slogan," "concept," "formula," "maxim," the more dialectically specific "thesis," and the German word *Begriff*.[34]

The total eradication of story, the deanecdotalization of film, was the intended result of this movement into intellectual cinematic language—the final removal of the formal vestiges of the neighboring arts of literature and theater. *Glass House* was, like *Capital*, initially conceived as a composition of distinct scenes, each with an acute political orientation, arranged free of any overarching narrative. Yet, as with *October*, Eisenstein ultimately began to see *Glass House* as a waystation on the path toward purely intellectual film. In a note of 5 September 1928, Eisenstein writes of the ideal triadic structure of "the new film," which would be a synthesizing balance of "the emotional," "the absolute" (pure cinematic form), and "the factual" (correct content) and that so far all of his projects—and indeed all Russian films of the day—had always favored one element over the others, failing at a total synthesis.[35] And then, switching to German, he writes, "*Rein wird die Synthese erst in Marx-Eisenstein-Film 'Kapital' sein!!!*"[36] Yet again, the *Capital* project—now presented hyperbolically as a true collaboration between Marx and Eisenstein—is given the burden of carrying the new "pure" language of film into creation. Further on the same page, however, we see how *Capital* depends (again) on *Glass House*, as Eisenstein writes, "(*Ebenso wie maximal unrein der Film Glaßhaus sein muß—durch 'Lehmbad' Glaßhaus zur Sonne des Marx-Filmes!) durch 'Fegefeuer' zum 'Paradies.'*"[37] Again, Eisenstein makes the proper achievement of his goals in *Capital* contingent on the dirty work to be done in *Glass House*, which, inevitably, was to include many elements of the old cinema within its idiosyncratic structure. Though it would aspire to pure intellectual film, it would necessarily remain impure in the particulars of its execution. The "genuine, pure cinema" in the *rein* manifestation that was Eisenstein's ultimate pursuit had to be drained of representational tendencies to become a vessel for the operative intellectual concept. The impurity of *Glass House* is tied, inevitably, to its still-present representational, anecdotal tendency; the *unrein* manifestation of the intellectual cinema would still rely on some other, lower form of signification (genre, story, character). Although it may have brought him closer to attaining a pure

intellectual cinema, the project lacked the extreme narrative asceticism at the heart of *Capital*.

One way in which this purity and impurity may be seen to operate on the level of practical creation is in the glaring disparity in visual productivity evidenced in the two projects: the *Glass House* notes are full of drawings by the filmmaker—some made as illustration to written notes, others that stand on their own as graphic ideas. On the other hand, although the *Capital* notes are sometimes accompanied by very compelling collage compositions made by the director from clippings of various print media, they are *entirely* devoid of any of Eisenstein's trademark ideating sketches—their imagination seems to be almost purely textual. This distinction, and the sensory and cognitive hierarchy it suggests, is another paradigm through which to view the two projects, with *Glass House* appearing as optically radical and *Capital* as intellectually radical. The one enacts new points of view, the other new conceptual combinations. The propaedeutic relationship between the two—that the revolution in visuality must occur before the one in cognition—is clear from Eisenstein's insistence on *Glass House* as preparatory work for *Capital*. Yet another reminder of this comes in the director's letter to Moussinac, in which he writes of *Capital*, "It is true that I won't get to this for another year or year and a half, since the field is absolutely untouched. *Tabula rasa*. And it will be necessary to do a lot of sketching before trying to treat such an enormous theme without compromising it."[38] With *Glass House*, this blank slate (or blank pane, rather) would become a very productive—if slippery—sketchpad.

Chapter 2

Glass House

> It seems to me that up until now I have done everything in cinema except cinema itself.
>
> —Sergei Eisenstein, in his diary, 13 February 1928

Though it occupied Eisenstein's journals and creative notebooks for the better part of two years and even received (increasingly anxious) repeated mention into the 1930s and at least one wistful reminiscence in the 1940s, *Glass House* never, strictly speaking, approached the status of a screenplay, nor even a legibly roughed-out libretto. What the Russian state archives hold of the *Glass House* material is one dedicated file of sixty-six notebook pages and a much larger number of notes that appear scattered throughout pages of his diaries dating primarily between January 1927 and December 1928, with some additional notes and correspondence in 1930. Broadly speaking, the *Glass House* text consists of the following: seven separate handwritten lists of carefully numbered potential shots or sequences of shots to be included in the film (one of the lists carries the German title "*Einfälle*" and another the English "Suggestions for the story"), amounting to approximately twenty-five pages of text; two separate brief outlines or synopses for the dramatic story; about fifty-five scattered mentions in diaries, sometimes with practical shot descriptions and sometimes primarily conceptual imaginings (typically shifting from Russian to English, French, and German); some few newspaper clippings marked as relating to *Glass House*; calculations for how many extras might be needed in various scenes; five pages of thoughts on specific technical considerations for visual

effects; and, most overwhelmingly, about ninety different drawings and sketches illustrating visual details, costumes, and fully conceived mise-en-scène. The sum indication of all this material is clear: that Eisenstein approached the project with urgency, and that the impetus for the project was primarily visual.[1] The drawings and the lists of possible shots represent the bulk of the film's material, a deep well of discretely imagined cinematic visions, each one a variation on the imagined optical interplay of glass set and camera lens.

The Ideal Material

Eisenstein, himself the son of a rather successful city architect, had trained as an engineer and understood something of the physics and material concerns of construction—indeed he would write extensively on architecture in later decades.[2] Eisenstein was also highly aware of current trends in architecture, both within the Soviet Union and outside it. His conversance with Soviet architecture is perhaps most apparent from his collaboration with Andrei Burov to produce the hyper-contemporary, modernist *kolkhoz* building shown in the extended dream sequence that forms the centerpiece of *The General Line*. Burov, credited as the film's architect, designed the building in the functional, rational style of Le Corbusier, whose 1923 Villa Jeanneret and 1924 Esprit Nouveau Pavilion are obvious touchstones (Le Corbusier visited Moscow in 1928, met with Eisenstein, and was shown scenes from the film, including those that featured the building, and he approved heartily).[3] The fact that Eisenstein had begun developing his ideas for *Glass House* while working on *The General Line* may suggest a continuity in the director's efforts to make architecture correspond both to the new social reality of the USSR and to Marxist discourse about it. One may see the utopian vision of an idealized agrarian system and its built space in the former film shading into a darker fantasy of capitalism's excesses and inequities in the latter, as seen through glass. In *The General Line*, new techniques of daily life and new patterns of thought culminate physically in a rationally designed new edifice; in *Glass House*, the modern edifice exists ex nihilo, and it is the retrograde structures of "American" capital that both expose and are exposed by the ideal architectural material.

In a note of September 1927, Eisenstein emphasizes that it was "under the influence of glass experiments in architecture" that the idea for *Glass House* occurred to him in Berlin—and it was glass-related

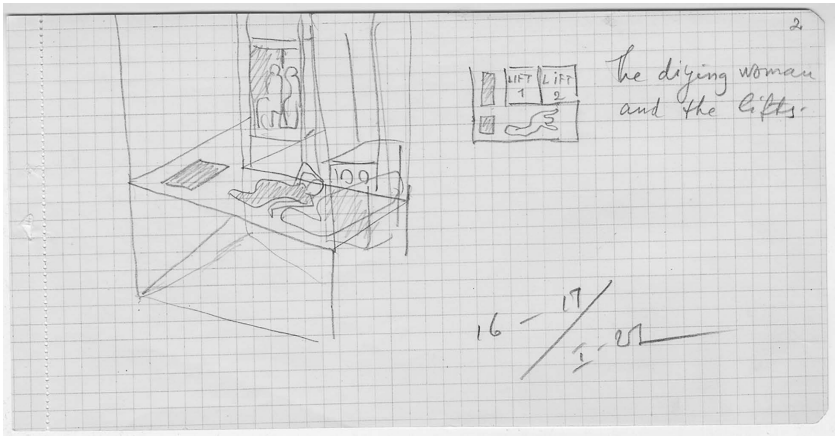
innovations by contemporary German architects of which he seemed to be particularly aware.[4] Eisenstein clearly endeavored to maintain his familiarity with these latest technical achievements as he worked on his glass project; his personal library included multiple German publications with information on the history of glass architecture—such as Martin Wagner and Adolf Behne's magazine *Das Neue Berlin* and Ludwig Hilberseimer's essay "Glas Architektur" published in a 1929 issue of *Die Form*—which he presumably acquired during his visits to Berlin.[5] The connection of Eisenstein's imagined *Glass House* to the real monuments of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century glass architecture is one aspect of this unrealized film that has frequently been commented on by scholars. Many have noted the possibly direct influence of projects such as Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's two contest-entry proposals of the early 1920s for glass skyscrapers in Berlin, the designs of which had been widely published.[6] Others have focused on a lineage between Eisenstein's conception of the glass building and the response of Constructivist architects (Nikolai Ladovsky, Konstantin Melnikov, Andrei Burov) in Russia or Le Corbusier in Western Europe to the practical demands for a socially transparent modern housing.[7] Mikhail Iampolski has argued that a "glass myth," originating in the eighteenth century and developing through a number of nineteenth- and early twentieth-century cultural channels, passes directly to Eisenstein and others in the Russian avant-garde; and Julia Bekman Chadaga has incorporated Eisenstein's project into her analysis of glass's vital role in the development of Russian aesthetic culture.[8]

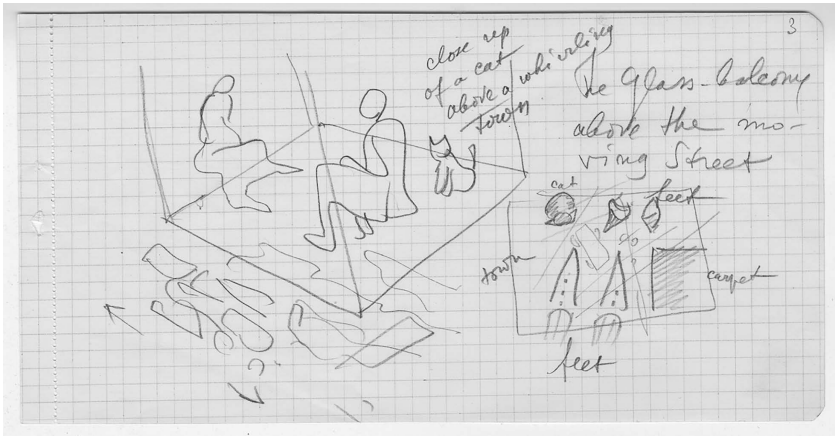
Eisenstein's cognizance of these "glass experiments" and the cultural traditions they emerge from certainly included the work of Bruno Taut, particularly his 1914 Glass House—a domed glass-and-concrete structure that quickly became an aesthetic manifesto for the technical and social possibilities of glass architecture (like the German symbolist writer Paul Scheerbart, from whom he drew explicit inspiration, Taut imagined a world brought to peace through use of the material). For Taut, as for Eisenstein, glass's overwhelming optical effects, the modulation of transparency, translucency, and opacity, was important for its implementation in building.[9] The circle of architects and thinkers that had coalesced around Taut—a group referred to as "Glass Chain"—included Walter Gropius, whose work might be seen as a bridge of sorts between Taut's Expressionist design and something that more closely approaches the form of Eisenstein's *Glass House* drawings.[10] Gropius's glass designs were more clearly marked by a concern for utility than

were Taut's Expressionist projects. His included the 1911–13 Fagus Fabrik, described by Nikolaus Pevsner as "the first time a complete façade [was] conceived in glass," an effect in which "the usual hard separation of exterior and interior is annihilated" and the 1926 Bauhaus Dessau workshop building, codesigned with Adolf Meyer, a structure that created the image of a complete, multifloored plane of glass through the use of a glass curtain wall.[11] The concept of the curtain wall—a nonstructural external wall made almost entirely of glass and designed to allow the passage of natural light into the building while allowing maximal transparency between interior and exterior—would have been necessary to achieve the flat-planed appearance of any of the external walls that Eisenstein drew for *Glass House*.[12]

From the more schematic drawings that Eisenstein made, his glass house can essentially be understood as a series of glass cuboids (equilateral cubes, rectangular prisms) arranged beside and atop one another in a vertical stack in order to form the high-rise building.[13] In this sense, one can note a clear connection to Ludwig Mies van der Rohe's Glasraum created with Lily Reich for the 1927 Deutsches Werkbund in Stuttgart, a structure described at the time by Siegfried Kracauer as "a transparent *glass box* interpenetrated by the neighboring spaces. Every piece of furniture and every movement creates magical shadow plays upon the walls, incorporeal silhouettes that waft through the air and merge with the mirror images arising from the glass space itself."[14] This description is uncannily like those that appear in Eisenstein's notes for his film at nearly the same moment in time—not only the use of glass as the primary constitutive and enclosing material but also the description of that material's permeability into neighboring spaces, the effects of light and shadow and their influence on the perception of the silhouettes that populate the space.[15]

These only slightly earlier experiments in glass architecture can be traced in a lineage to certain architectural innovations of the middle of the previous century, the development of new techniques in the use of sheet glass and cast-iron girding systems, tested primarily in the orangeries and greenhouses that proliferated across Europe, including Rohault de Fleury's 1833 Mexican Hothouse in Paris's Jardin des Plantes, Joseph Paxton's 1836–41 Great Conservatory at Chatsworth, and Decimus Burton and Richard Turner's 1844–48 Palm House at Kew Gardens. In these and other important greenhouses of the time, the concept of the glass house began to develop from the strict question of horticultural necessity (the glass structure allowing for the





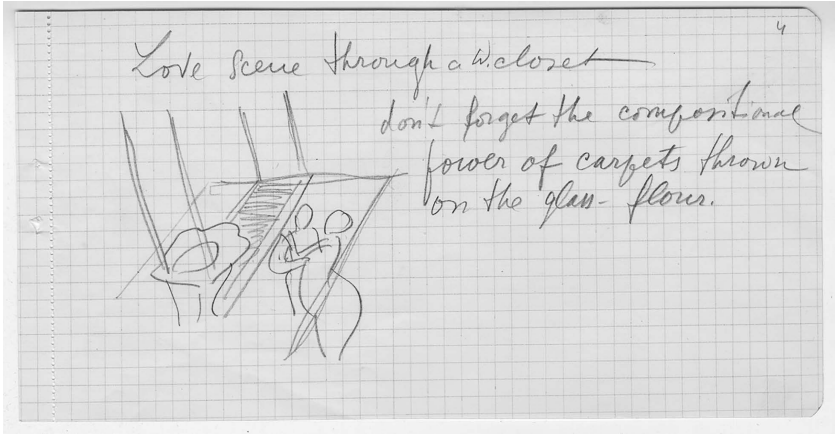


Figure 4.1. Sketches of possible scenes for *Glass House*. RGALI 1923-2-162, 2–4. Used with permission.

heat and sunlight needed by the exotic plants it housed) to one that simultaneously pursued an aesthetic utopianism in which these constructed spaces were meant to become prismatic—that the view from without would reveal the Arcadian treasures housed within; the view from within would give way to landscape on all sides and unfettered sky above. This trend develops through Sir Joseph Paxton's Crystal Palace, completed in 1851 in Hyde Park, London, for the Great Exhibition. The purpose of this most famous of glass houses was not to house an empire's collection of exotic plants, but rather to house an exposition of technical achievements from around the globe. And foremost of these achievements was the building itself, a spectacle in terms of size, capacity, and material—nearly three hundred thousand panes of glass enclosing a space of thirty-three million cubic feet.[16] In Paxton's Crystal Palace, the elision of optical boundary between interior and exterior space makes possible a superlative display of capital's accomplishments to the viewer outside the building; for the subject within the building, it allows an infinite gaze into conquerable space without.

This genealogy of glass architecture all comes to bear on Eisenstein's plans, and particularly their shared fulcrum of opacity and transparency—for most of the buildings discussed, this operates as a utopian trend, couched in the implication that, as a building material, glass held the potential to both birth and house a better world. The potential the substance provides for both structure and *visibility*, taken literally, promises a world more egalitarian, socially, and politically transparent, one unfettered by previous constraints. And, while Eisenstein's glass house certainly follows closely upon this sequence of technical advancements, it is not merely as a development of the same utopian bent, but rather as an exercise in extremity. The central edifice of *Glass House* can be seen as the apotheosis of the glass dream, the idea taken to its limit, the point at which idealism crashes upon the real, socialist material structure, crashes upon inescapable capitalist inequity—ultimately where the utopian drive reveals its inborn dystopia. As Walter Benjamin would write of glass architecture in 1933, demonstrating the dualities of transparency, "Glass is, in general, the enemy of secrets. It is also the enemy of possession."[17] What glass destabilizes of privacy, property, and the individual had already become the basis of more nightmarish visions of glass architecture from Dostoevsky to Evgeny Zamiatin; within Eisenstein's plans for *Glass House*, the distressing aspects of the transparent material function as antithesis to the optical ecstasy that the infinite glass panels initially might suggest.[18] And here we may see

how the material operates perfectly in the context of a dystopian satire of capitalism—it recalls the tautology in the final line in the first volume of Marx's *Capital*: "the capitalist mode of production and accumulation, and therefore capitalist private property as well, have for their fundamental condition the annihilation of that private property which rests on the labour of the individual himself; in other words, the expropriation of the worker."[19]

The film's set was to be a tower with walls, floors, and ceilings made entirely of glass, its inhabitants living out their lives—initially unwittingly so—in full view of one another, and in full view, from potentially every direction, of the film camera. Transparency, as we may expect, was to be the visual and thematic determinant to the entire concept: the ability to look from public space into private, from one private space into another. Perhaps most intriguing, this transparency would allow the film viewer to experience new and unexpected perspectival orientations (looking up at the soles of a neighbor's shoes, the view downward through the glass-tiled floor of a kitchen to water rushing underneath). Central to Eisenstein's concept with this film is the depiction of daily life under capitalism as though in a vitrine or kaleidoscope. The careful arrangement of the specific collisions between these scenes was the point at which the specific epistemic content of the thesis was meant to be produced. Here transparency functions as a political metaphor but also as the signifier of a strictly optical utopia.

It is a utopia, however, that is constantly countered by a reflected dystopia.[20] For those (including the cinema viewer) who peer into and through the glass enclosure, the vision operates as a fantasy of omniscience; for those within the glass cells, the exposure entailed by such vision operates as a nightmare. A slight inversion is at play here too: transposed to the context of capitalism, the socialist dream of minimizing the private sphere and maximizing shared residential dwelling and social space becomes a capitalist nightmare, as privacy and property are materially suspended. By literalizing the urge for transparency, Eisenstein slyly sought to demonstrate how the elision of boundaries between public and private may have its roots not only in a postcapitalist, prosocialist communal desire but also in a strictly psychological impulse toward voyeurism.

The function of transparency was most palpably to be experienced by viewers on an optical level, calculated to the maximum intensities achievable with the cinema camera—yet the optical intricacy was everywhere to be tied to its manifestation in political and social metaphor

(a commentary on socioeconomic transparency, for example). Since such discursive content was entirely inseparable from the distinct optical world the initial sketches suggest, vision itself becomes politicized in the imagined film. The notes and sketches for *Glass House* are not arranged in any discernible order and were accumulated over time, more or less free of story constraints—as a result, they appear as the gradual piling up of attempts at projecting coherent form onto an aesthetic concept with a capacity for sustaining a seemingly infinite number of possible incarnations. Indeed, the notes, scattered though they are, serve as a perfect instance of *pars pro toto*, with each distinctly sketched shot or written idea for a sequence suggesting something of the whole film, which itself never came close to being properly articulated.

Approaching the *Glass House* notes, then, as a text *in process*, some distinct stages in its evolution begin to make themselves clear.[21] The first stage of the project, the most purely conceptual, is the direct proliferation of visual ideas and sketches that themselves are not organized around any specific narrative. This stage of the process is an extended exercise in visual possibility and rhetorical marksmanship; the sketched images that emerge are sharp, discrete, and modular. Each of these compositional ideas was meant to address a particular of capitalist excess while being deployed as part of a dialectical critique of individualism—a combinational technique, powerful visual upon powerful visual, that the director would refer to as a comedic "montage of formulae."[22]

The second stage of the project occurs as Eisenstein attempts to insinuate a plot around which this surplus of visual material might be molded. The task of stringing together these acute visuals into a coherent story seems to have constantly eluded the director. His first impulse, while still in Moscow imagining an "American film," had been to establish a collaboration with a writer like Upton Sinclair.[23] Later, in America, he sought help from his regular collaborators Grigori Alexandrov and Ivor Montagu, but with no luck. Paramount put their writers at his disposal, and this too failed. The documents that come closest to providing a full view of what might have been the film's intended story are two separate synopses—one written in December 1928, and another in May 1930. These synopses perform the following organizing task: the first arranges the mass of visual material into a prologue, followed by five simple acts that move the building's inhabitants through consecutive periods of "unconsciousness" (they do not realize they are everywhere surrounded by transparency), "consciousness" (they are made aware of it), "shame" (they become self-conscious),

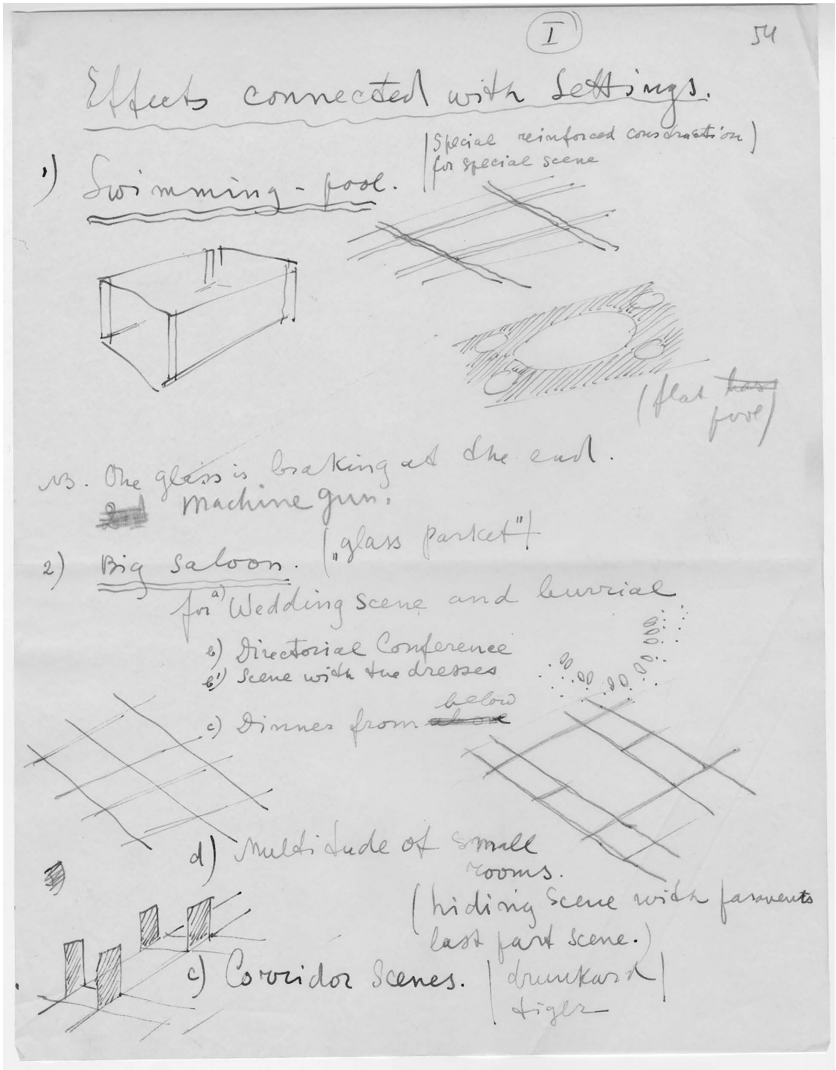


Figure 4.2. Eisenstein's schematic drawings of the glass house. RGALI 1923-2-162, 54–55. Used with permission.

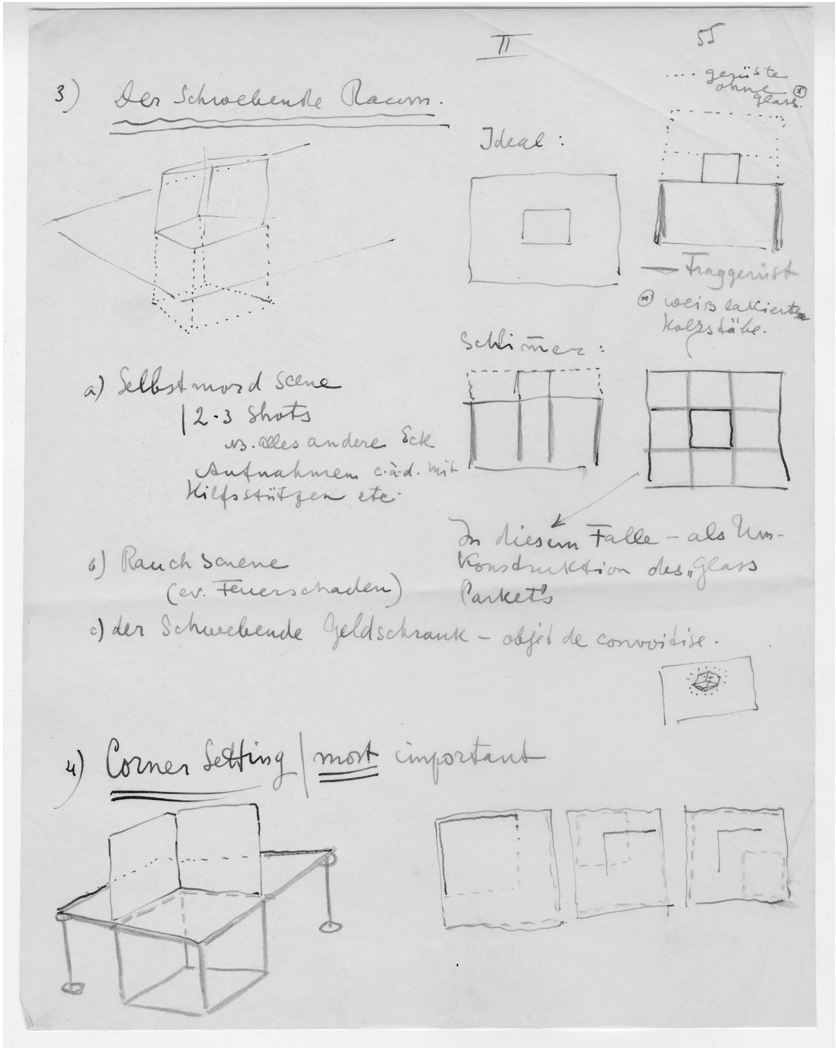


Figure 4.2. (Continued)

"competition"[24] (they seek out ways to benefit from the transparency), "conflict" (competition between characters leads to violent collisions), "tragedy" (suicide and murder), and "catastrophe" (the culminating moment of the building's destruction and, in some notes, replacement by a *kolkhoz*).[25] A sociopolitical parable about American capitalism and its inevitable endpoint begins to come into focus. The second synopsis (written in New York for Paramount Pictures) follows the structure of the previous synopsis, filling out the sections with specific narrative developments and introducing characters such as "the Poet," a Christ-figure who enlightens the building's inhabitants about their visual vulnerability, and a violent robot called "the mechanical man."[26]

In a third stage of the story's development, arising just as the project began to stall, Eisenstein attempts to endow it with greater gnostic value: the Poet/Christ-figure is contrasted with a father, the Old Man, who turns out to have been the glass house's architect, its Creator, and later the instrument of its destruction—the parallels here to Christian creation myth becoming more overt.[27] Though this contrast in narrative modes would have had enormous influence on the semantic possibilities of the film, in both cases Eisenstein's notes stress the fact that the narrative should turn on the fact that the benighted state of the glass house's denizens is a socially conditioned phenomenon: people's indifference one to another can be shown by having the actors not see one another through the walls and floors, because they do not look—it is a learned 'nonnoticing.'"[28] And, in both cases, when they are alerted to the transparency to which they previously had been blind, the awareness that ensues leads to the destruction of their building. In any case, these attempts at producing an appropriate story for the visual concept led Eisenstein down a path of anxiety that threatened his commitment to the project entirely. In July 1930, he writes from Los Angeles to Pera Atasheva in Moscow: "Right now I am having major concerns about 'Story.' Should I make *Glass House* or some other thing?"[29]

The latter two stages of the project appear as pragmatic and ultimately ineffective concessions to the demands of form and the concrete requirements of film production. The overwhelming majority of the *Glass House* material belongs to the first, strictly visual stage of the concept's imagining and may be seen as the direct product of Eisenstein's search for a radical cinematic language.[30]

Long before the narrative for the film had begun to coalesce, the first inkling of a basic rhetorical structure emerged in the idea of an abstract prologue that would begin *Glass House*. This prologue is first

mentioned in a note of 18 September 1927—more than a year before Eisenstein put down the first brief synopsis on paper. Conceived as a sort of overture for the film and titled "a symphony of glass," it calls for an abstracted primordial ocean of glass to eventually be "blown out into every form. Glass hair and glass filaments are stretched out. Surfaces, facets, objects, a glass automobile (I saw this somewhere in a magazine)—and then, the house."[31] Later, at the end of 1928, this symphony is developed further and appended (in German) to the first script synopsis: "The story of glass from ancient times and frivolous uses of glass (jewelry, glass beads, glass chandeliers, monocles) to glass design—glass cashiers' booths, glass automobiles (Ford), glass coffins, glass hearses, glass furniture, glass walls, glass . . . glass . . . glass . . . a glass house."[32]

The prologue notes show glass as a primordial substance, moving from formlessness to infinitely mutable form before gradually settling into the shape (the glass house) that becomes relevant to the picture at hand.[33] This movement from formlessness to form—from a tumult of amorphous glass to a transparent automobile or coffin—is, as an overture, a preview of the oppressive stasis that the substance would eventually impose in its regimented, ossified form, the glass building, maximally exploited by capital, with its dystopia of infinite vision and infinite isolation. From the start of the film then, potential viewers would be made to observe a cinematic material history: glass from its origins through its evolution and employment.[34] But this is a history to which only the audience would be privy, since the primordial maelstrom of glass and glass objects that fills the screen vanishes once it has delivered the glass house and the prologue ends. After this, the film was to have moved immediately into its first series of "situations" featuring the building's residents—and for them, glass has no history, it exists only as itself, a pervasive and encompassing material with no question of origin, the substance of the building that circumscribes the whole of their existence.

Whatever Eisenstein's abstracted thoughts may have been on glass as a primordial element, it is clear that it was in Berlin in 1926 that they begin to take on the crucial elements of form. Indeed, he had visited the *Metropolis* set in Babelsberg and pondered the use of glass in set construction, had seen firsthand Eugene Schüfftan's innovations in trick photography and their employment of glass reflection. But he also began here to develop serious thoughts on the role of glass in contemporary architecture—its simultaneous material capacity for

structural stability and for specific aesthetic and optical experiences of interiority, exteriority, transparency, reflection. There are notes on glass's potential to become frosted and opaque in the cold, for its smooth surface to be imitated by the calm surface of a pool of water (an illusion that would likely be broken by an inevitable ripple), and for the solid transparency that allows for juxtapositions (instances of children inches away from wild beasts) that enact a simultaneous closeness and separation.[35]

Visual penetrability countered by physical impenetrability is at the heart of the building's sociopolitical conception as well: the specter of class consciousness is raised when people of one class recognize those of another through the glass, though any action that may result from this consciousness is perpetually blocked. In other words, just as the boundary between public and private is elided, the porousness is revealed to be an illusion: a child who encounters a lion located inches away on the other side of the glass wall feels both terrified and safe, while the lion salivates but remains hungry. Moreover, the early drawings and notes always approach the glass used in the building's construction as a bidirectional substance: its constructive potential is inextricable from its ever-present potential to be broken, to shatter, to deconstruct. One does not think of smashing other building materials—brick or stone or metal, for example—the same way that one might think of smashing glass. Glass's proneness to shattering is a constant threat within the frame. Anything or anyone seems liable to develop the power to smash the structure at any point.[36]

Situation Comedy/Comedy of Situations

Not only does Eisenstein refer to *Glass House* as an American film, but he also qualifies its Americanness in explicitly visual terms: "A view into America through glass walls."[37] The America Eisenstein aimed at was a schematized one of industrial capitalism, where the extreme advancement of industry opens infinite possibility for construction and the exploitation of material, but in which social relations are stilted by bourgeois acquisitiveness and the compulsion for privacy. The idea was for the film to take an ironic approach to exposing something of the contradiction between contemporary American reality and the clichéd version of it portrayed in Hollywood films—and that its path to doing so would be the materialization of a visual metaphor. Eisenstein, the Soviet director, would look "through walls" to view America and

make his "American" film. Glass would be the facilitating substance, the transparent material allowing him this penetrating gaze.

Beyond the metaphorical potential of the film's glass walls, at the heart of its conception lay a remarkable conceit, an intrinsic ambidextrousness: Eisenstein was interested in making a scathing, critical satire about America, and he wanted to use American money to do so. Famously, he had met with Douglas Fairbanks Jr. and Mary Pickford when they had visited Moscow in the summer of 1926, and the pair had invited him to come to the United States to make a film.[38] It is clear from his notes that Eisenstein took this invitation seriously and that he thought Fairbanks and Pickford might be able, under the aegis of their United Artists, to provide an opportunity to produce the *Glass House* film.[39] Propelled by these initial encouragements, the director recognized the need to devise a script proposal for a film that both answered the ideological and structural demands (the potential for Marxist cinema theses) with which he had now come to relate to his work and maintained the interest of his potential Western backers. In essence, he needed his proposal to serve, as it were, two masters.

A note of 13 February 1927 reveals his intentions:

> If it comes to writing a script [proposal] for *Glasshouse*, then it ought to be written *comme il faut*:
>
> Two separate sheets. The first, with some paragraphs on individualism as the only imaginable form of existence under the conditions of capitalism, and on the use of technical, philosophical, and other innovations toward the bourgeoisie's selfish ends, etc., etc. Basically, a page of elementary politics.
>
> And a second sheet—the most clichéd *continuity* of the most clichéd picture from the West, with profiteering, inventions, stock market fights "to the death," etc. All the usual pulpy attributes. Totally acceptable for any [version of] the West.[40]

Here we see a film meant to play properly to two different audiences. On the one hand, it is rooted in an ideologically oriented, anticapitalist perspective that would support an ironical treatment of American reality. On the other hand, it seamlessly participates in the low generic devices that—from the perspective of 1927 Soviet Russia—defined a certain brand of American cinema.[41]

The fine line that the director intended to walk with this American film becomes particularly clear in this plan to create two separate documents. One was meant to be shown to the Main Commission for

Repertoires (*Glavrepertkom*), a body under the Soviet Ministry of Education that approved all state productions, and the other to potential American producers.

> For GRK (*Glavrepertkom)* we need only to present *Glasshouse* in its ideological conception—without alluding to any kind of plot.
>
> For the West, only the clichéd "book" without alluding to any ideological conception.
>
> But only GRK will come out at all pleased by the finished film![42]

By now Eisenstein was experienced with getting his preparatory material—for both theater and film—approved by *Glavrepertkom*. And indeed, he was confident that the originating idea for *Glass House* would be read to have a degree of ideological integrity similar to that of his previous works. The compelling new gambit of this material was the intention to have it funded and produced through American sources, with the intention, ultimately, of leaving them displeased with the result. Was it the director's hope that his film's inevitable aesthetic strengths would mask its political agenda just long enough for it to be completed and released? As I will show in my analysis of the film's materials, the relationship between Eisenstein's conception of *Glass House*'s form and its content was a delicate one—the two are conceived only as provisionally distinct on paper, but as an interpenetrating unity once filmed. To tempt the West with form and the Soviet censors with content seems to have been the intention—but whatever it was that he imagined of the specific American production experience, it is clear that Eisenstein's primary political intention was to continue in the vein of Marxian cinematic experimentation that he had been mining since his first films, and with particular intensity since he began his work on *The General Line* and *October*.

It is with this clarity of ideological method, idiosyncratic though it may have been, that the first materials addressing the film's future structure appear in the archive. In his notes, Eisenstein cleverly deploys quotation marks to suggest how cinematic clichés might be deftly, lightly harnessed in *Glass House* toward historical materialist ends: "the situation comedy will be replaced by the comedy of 'situations'" [*komediiu polozhenii smeniaiet—komediia "polozhenii"*]. The Russian *polozhenie* here, is used doubly: first, to suggest the classical dramatic typology of the "situation comedy"—popular film comedy's most common form, itself arising from a generic tradition broadly emerging from classical European and Hellenic theater, and within Russia from Fonvizin,

and second, now in quotation marks, to denote Eisenstein's intended rhetorical, philosophical use of *polozhenie*, a meaning closer to "position" or "thesis." In other words, the clichéd piece of generic material is transformed into the basic unit of dialectical argumentation.[43] The task, then, would be to use the pieces of a familiar form—lifted straight from its American context—and orient it toward a ruthless Marxist social analysis.

How might this have worked, practically? One idea Eisenstein records is the presentation of a parade of clichéd episodes that operate according to the Hollywood system. They appear but are then violently subverted: "Offer a parade of clichéd American episodes with stars embodying a series of inferior figures—and then 'kill' them with people 'from the plow'—*real men*."[44] Here, what kills the cliché is the sudden shift in perspective that would allow the stars of the scene to be comprehended as *real*—whether through a judiciously intercut close-up or some other device of spatial juxtaposition. It is clear that Eisenstein's ideal for casting at this time, *tipazh*—in which nonactors were selected for roles because of the signifying potential of their native physiognomies—was meant to be used to demolish the illusory cliché of the American-style film star's superficial beauty.[45] This sort of upending of convention amounts to a collision between two systems of filmmaking—the unmitigated aestheticization of Hollywood versus the tendentious formal experimentation and anti-individualism of the Soviet avant-garde. Indeed, it was this injection of the real, as transmitted through the appearance of bodies and faces of actual people, that was meant as a resistance and a disavowal of the capitalist rhetoric that underpinned the ideal of Hollywood stardom. The familiar forms, presented in a parade of Hollywood clichés, here would become preposterous when confronted dialectically with the actuality of the real people thrust into or placed in proximity with these clichés.

This network of clichéd moments was to play out spatially—each glass unit within the total glass structure acting as the stage for one or more pointed situational episodes, the glass material making each unit ostensibly visible from all others. The seeming infinity of playing fields (the scenes go on and on the further the viewer looks into the frame) is less the point here than is the visual collision between the neighboring spaces. And here we can see how the house is instrumental to the project's basic premise—any given scene of cliché can be served up and then, through juxtaposition, its inflection can be changed. Accordingly, each of Eisenstein's drawings for the film should be read as potentially

incomplete—awaiting the necessary collision with some further correlation of transparency and focus in Eisenstein's dialectical rhetoric. Such contiguous treatment of conflicting ideas was the key to Eisenstein's concept for *Glass House*: a given scene (for example, a starving child and mother in an impoverished room) was to butt up against a visual antipode (say, an opulent banquet)—and not through traditional intercutting, but through slight movement of the camera and its focus, allowing a *simultaneous* viewing of contrasting scenes. Through the glass walls of the residential high-rise, viewers were not only to be privy to a series of private scenes but also to be made to process the proximity, tension, and contrast of what these scenes imply socially and economically.[46] The complexity of producing such deep visual contrast led Eisenstein to note that in *Glass House* "the (usual) perception of the frame will be turned inside out."[47] As the work notebooks bear out, the frame itself was no longer meant to be unequivocal but would be made multivalent (*neodnoznachen*), and this revolution in visuality depended as much on the transparency of the glass set that the director had envisioned as it did on the possibilities of the film camera. By so drastically rewriting the significance of the mundane or clichéd event, the film would reveal a value or process within it that would be otherwise invisible.

Upon apprehending this, Eisenstein's basic structural strategy for the film, one can envision the glass building on a grand scale. The structure has the capacity for an endless number of such dramatic *theses*, arranged in one vast, interrelated system of transparent rooms within

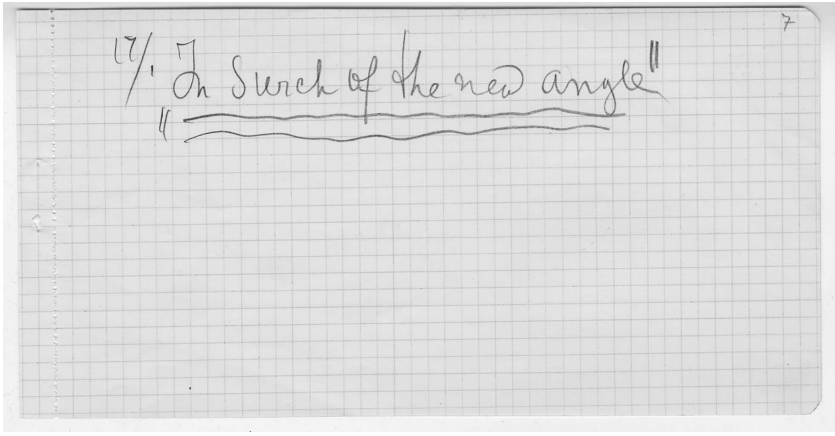


Figure 4.3. The stated search for new angles and some sketches made in this quest. RGALI 1923-2-162, 7, 24, 26, 50. Used with permission.

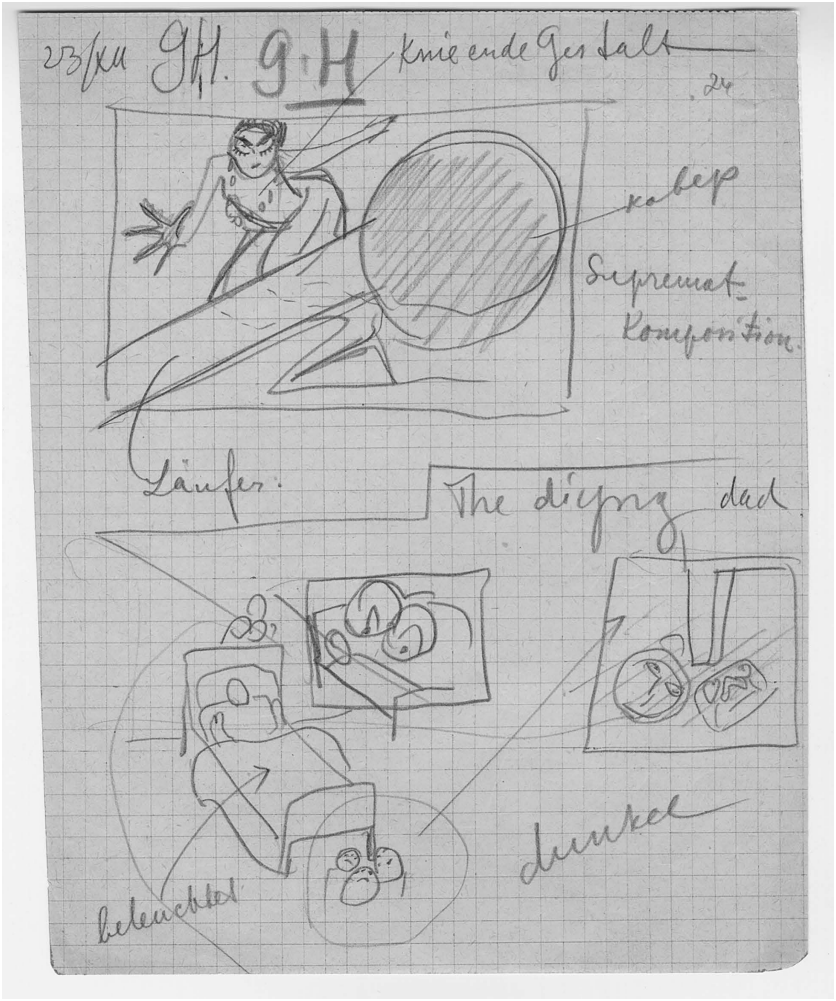


Figure 4.3. (Continued)

Figure 4.3. (Continued)

Figure 4.3. (Continued)

which and between which action could be seen at close range and from a distance, through walls, looking from one room into the next. These scenes could be played out in carefully composed sequences and held in constant tautness one with another; consequently, a gradual synthesizing tendentiousness would develop as the film moved through its narrative. Oksana Bulgakowa has referred to these individual, spatially compartmentalized but synchronically occurring scenes, the cinema-discursive theses of Eisenstein's planning, as "comedies of the eye"[48]—and indeed it is vision itself, and its material possibilities, that become the topic of the film's developing thematic drive.

In Search of the New Angle

Among Eisenstein's notes and drawings for the *Glass House* project is a small notepad with the label, scrawled in English, "*Glasshouse*." On the seventh page of this object, on an otherwise blank sheet of graph paper, Eisenstein has written, in large letters, and underlined twice, "In search of the new angle."[49] This phrase, half enigmatic and half programmatic, is the formal and methodological crux of the director's concept for the film. Vital to Eisenstein's plan to present his "comedy of situations," to employ filmic cliché in the service of ideological argument, is the constant maneuverability of perspective that would allow the director to carefully dictate the orientation of the viewer to the scenes presented. Further in this notebook, Eisenstein writes, "Take the most ordinary actions *and change the point of view*. Take the most traditional types and psychic collisions and *change the point of view*."[50] And elsewhere: "All of the most quotidian details—including the unrolling of rugs (thus covering parts of the scene below) from an *absolutely new angle of view* obtain a certain uncanniness and interest."[51] In all the quoted instances in which this "new angle of view" is discussed, Eisenstein switches from Russian to English to describe the new perspective. This serves as a reminder that the intended locus of production *and* intended audience of the film is English-speaking America and its film production industry. It is also a reminder of the generic play that was central to this process of defamiliarizing: it is not merely a new view of phenomena, but also a new view of clichéd cinema forms—it is a self-conscious subversion of cinema modes through the radical use of cinema technique and photographic material.[52] The position of the film camera, its movement, and its ability to direct the viewer's gaze through focusing techniques were central to the plans for

this subversion, as was the controlled transparency of the glass that would make up the entirety of the film set.[53]

The goal of this full-scale reinvention of the frame was, ultimately, the politicization of empty aesthetic content: to turn the Hollywood film—itself an implicit affirmation of capital—into a critique of the same. The wealth of drawings for the project provide some instances for how this "new angle" was meant to be achieved.

Layering of action. Of the new perspectival possibilities, the one Eisenstein most thoroughly explores is the composition in which significant action occurs on multiple planes within the frame. The depicted actions may be occurring in direct relationship with one another or they may be notable for their distinct incongruity—the unifying factor is a transparency that makes simultaneous action in multiple spaces possible. A man works diligently at his office desk as the cars and lights of the city blaze and shuttle around him on all sides.[54] A woman dies in solitude, but in plain view of the people traveling in elevators up and down just past her.[55] A "love scene through a water closet" carefully positions the room's toilet to frame a pair of lovers *in flagrante* seen on the floor below.[56] Lying in bed at night, a man witnesses a murder committed two rooms away.[57] An opulent dinner is served in a well-lit banquet hall, with small, dark, impoverished rooms all around it.[58] This last contrast between wealth and poverty is one of the most clichéd juxtapositions in the cinematic toolkit: Eisenstein himself had made use of similar tension in most of his previous films. Here, however, the cliché is renewed as we see what had been rendered *sequentially*—through traditional cross-cutting montage—occurring now *simultaneously*, in the depth of one shot. These instances are the most potent opportunity for Eisenstein to reconfigure the cinema frame: the dynamic conflict of actions at multiple depths within the camera's field of vision is made sharper by the intervening membranes of the glass walls that separate the action. Like the celluloid frames that are the segmenting factor of traditional shot-to-shot montage, the transparent glass of the walls, floors, and ceilings act as imperceptible gaps between montage units that are combined *within* one frame. The meaning of a given action, then, becomes contingent on all the actions that happen beyond and before them.

Skewed and shifted angles. Several of the proposed scenes for *Glass House* make dual use of camera position and the transparency of glass to make possible angles that would otherwise have been impossible. For the most part, this destabilizing of standard pictorial methods seems to

have been organized around the desire to overcome the straightforward frontality inherited from the theatrical proscenium. One scene, for example, was to feature a clichéd unfaithful wife hurrying to hide her lover under the bed as her husband returns home. Eisenstein's drawing for this scene sketches the frame, to be shot from the floor below. The lover is visible, lying flat above the camera, as though suspended in air, the bed above him, and to the side, in sharply receding perspective, the wife, discernible by her boots, petticoats, and barely visible face—and next to her, the husband, bent and searching for the hidden lover.[59] This skewed perspective on the genre scene is made even more emphatic by the form, in the foreground, of the occupant of the apartment below as he watches the drama unfold above him. Similarly constructed scenes include a grieving woman (or, in a separate note, a man) kneeling over a rug and runner, also seen from below and forming what Eisenstein calls a "Suprematist *composition*";[60] a wedding dress, seen from below, displaying the meticulously covered body of the bride,[61] an elegant man, seen from below, his shabby heel visible, revealing otherwise hidden destitution.[62] These views from below were influenced by the stark foreshortening that Eisenstein remarks on in Andrea Mantegna's 1480 painting *The Lamentation of Christ*.[63]

Segmentation and multiplication. One sheet of Eisenstein's *Glass House* notes features three drawings of figures seen through the corner of a glass cube ["*Le cube d'extérieur*"], such that their bodies are segmented into three distinct sections.[64] The inevitable visual distortion of this angle—incongruous lines due to the thickness and angles of the transparent glass panes—even if subtle, complicates and destabilizes the coherence of the human body. On the other hand, there are several examples of scenes in which a dynamic occurs between two or more (vertically or horizontally) adjacent rooms in the building—for example, a man grieves on his hands and knees; on the floor above him, a ring of people watches him as he performs his sorrow; below him, a few figures look upward, likewise observing. Shots upward from the floor below alternate with low-angle perspectival shots from the grieving man's level and then shots downward from the floor above, the resulting panoptic effect forcing the familiar grieving pose into a flicker of various postures. In these drawings, we observe forms that are at one point visible, readable, integral become segmented, reflected, destabilized—and vice versa. It was the possibility of camera movement *within* the glass set that seems to have most excited the director's early imaginings. Eisenstein's 1926 visit to Fritz Lang's Babelsberg set

for *Metropolis*—as Mary Seton describes and Eduard Tisse later confirmed—was punctuated by Eisenstein's investigation into the new methods of camerawork being devised by Lang and his cameramen Karl Freund and Gunther Rittau. Seton suggests these inquiries were rooted in an interest "in the methods Lang was using 'to free the camera from static angles.'"[65] Such techniques of uninhibited camerawork—attaching a camera to a swinging platform, for instance—transposed later to the imagined sets of *Glass House*, and combined with the multiform optical possibilities of the glass set, would undoubtedly multiply the pictorial complications and contingencies that were key to Eisenstein's concept for the film.

Demonstrated views. Across all these new angles, the concept of spectatorship has been implicit. Eisenstein's sketches constantly show characters in the act of viewing other characters from whom they are separated by discrete geometric planes of glass. This reification of the cinema spectatorship paradigm is also a powerful tool in the rehabilitation of clichéd imagery. A stereotyped scene of intimate family grief—a dying father—is suddenly shifted toward the grotesque as the lights change slightly and we see that both above and below, the gathered faces of voyeuristic neighbors are viewing the scene.[66] A cuckolded man watches the shadows of his wife and lover projected onto the matte glass in the next room, while the film's viewing audience sees both planes of the drama.[67] In almost every scene, someone outside the scene is watching the scene unfold. As a modeling device for the film's viewer—both alerting them to and implicating them in just such voyeurism themselves—this focuses the rhetorical potential of the thesis that the given shot is meant to carry and, by overtly modeling the viewer's act of viewing, come close to revealing the filmmaking device. Since only slight shifts in lighting are necessary to transform glass's transparency to reflectivity, and given the prevalence of reflective surface, *Glass House* also benefits from a perpetual if unconscious anxiety of *possible* reflection—of the camera, of the viewer's own image. Indeed, a kind of mirroring abounds as the objects of demonstrated voyeuristic gazes turn and themselves look back, making the original viewing subjects into objects of a new gaze. Such moments both encourage and challenge the viewer's pleasure in voyeurism: they follow the model of the house's residents, participating in illicit views, and yet are made poignantly aware of their own implication in the process by the constant threat of reflection and exposure.[68]

Each of these radical techniques for the reinvention of the film frame facilitates the larger conceptual goal to "change the angle of view," and each is without a doubt the fulcrum on which the entire concept for *Glass House* rests. In his note on the need to produce a doubled script treatment (the one for Soviet repertoire censors, the other for American producers), the director writes, "The whole question is in the staging—in literalizing and laying bare through *the new point of view*. Through *the new angle*."[69] Again, Eisenstein's use of English in this instance is sophisticated enough that his reiteration of the emphasis on this "new" perspective includes both the colloquial phrase "point of view," which might suggest a more abstracted rhetorical perspective, and "angle," which moves that abstracted position into the more literal terminology of film technique.[70] And that he yokes this with a clear allusion to two literary maneuvers from the Russian Formalist playbook—the literalizing of metaphor and the laying bare of devices—is no accident. Both would now become clearly harnessed into *Glass House*'s depictive method.[71] They become the tools through which the ordinary and the quotidian were to be saturated with "uncanniness and interest." The connection to formalism—and to Shklovsky's "Art as Device"—can be felt in the note of January 1928, where Eisenstein simply exclaims "*Glass House* (strikes) against automatism!"[72]

The technique of "laying bare" [*obnazhenie*] is particularly poignant when employed literally—"to uncover," "to make naked." Eisenstein's sketches for the film include instances in which not only inequities of social structure and personal greed are parodically laid bare, but also moments of literal baring in which the dwellers of the glass house were to be put on full display: see, for example, the drawing labeled "Love scene through a w[ater] closet" in which the glass walls would neither conceal the lovers nor the inner workings of the restroom. In a note of 18 September 1927, as part of a list of visual ideas for the film, he has simply scrawled the word "*Nudité*."[73] And by June 1928 the general idea of nudity has developed into a pair of farcical scenes, the first of which features a character referred to as "the Idealist" delivering a sermon in which the entire audience would be shown completely naked as the idealist's "insight" [*prozrenie*] is made literal and they, in turn, are asked to "bare their souls" [*obnazhite vashi dushi*].[74] Eisenstein again reiterates that the technique he is interested in is the literalization of metaphor as he writes of the adjacent instance of nudity, "Of course this is all *symbolique*, like the transparency of the walls in the house. But then it is 'realized.'"[75] Nudity works to further the metaphorical potential of

vision—by laying bare the bodies of the building's inhabitants to each other's gazes and to that of the viewing audience, the director creates a potent metaphor of transparency, itself a new angle on familiar scenes, made literal through the bodies of his actors.[76]

The Glass Subjectif

The architectural and visual possibilities of the glass building are only the starting point for *Glass House*'s thematic and rhetorical labors. In his notes, Eisenstein repeatedly returns to the idea of movement *through* and *within* the glass space, both by the characters of the film (as they move, their vision is to be transformed) and by the camera (as it moves, the audience's vision is to be transformed). This movement, more than anything else, is oriented toward the creation of a specific position, a perspective by which the viewer would experience *Glass House* in all its spatial and combinational complexity. The relationship Eisenstein imagined between movement, montage, and subjective vision can be read in a later, fuller articulation in essays of the late 1930s. One of these, "Montage and Architecture," in which Eisenstein engages with Auguste Choisy's descriptions of the Athenian Acropolis as a "montage sequence . . . which our legs create by walking among the buildings," suggests that architecture (and movement through it) was one aesthetic paradigm in which "the total representation of a phenomenon in its full multi-dimensional visuality" could be fixed. For Eisenstein, "only the film camera has solved the problem of doing this on a flat surface."[77] Clarifying this in his essay "El Greco y el cine," he demonstrates the similarity between the sort of montage that happens as architectural space is penetrated and seen from multiple views (by a human subject) and cinematic montage in which "into one and the same place—onto the screen—various elements (fragments) of a phenomenon are 'brought together,' shot at various degrees of closeness, from various perspectives and various angles."[78] These thoughts on the perceiving eye within space make most apparent the principle that it is through a multiplicity of perspectives (as through movement, as through montage) that produces the synthetic experience of perspective in cinema and the subjectivities of its makers and viewers.

In an undated note of 1929, on one sheet of paper, written with the air of offhand observation, Eisenstein muses on the word *objective* and its semantic implication for filmmakers—and his thoughts suggest a total revision of the history of optics.

> The piece of ground glass placed in front of the "camera obscura" was given the name "objective [lens]" completely erroneously. This is the tribute that must be paid to cine-ocular superficiality.
>
> The photographic objectivity of the objective (lens) is a prejudice.
>
> In the same way that the objectivity of the frame is a prejudice.
>
> The frame is a process of conflict for the director's organizational intentions and the uninhibited sprawl of nature itself.[79]

Here Eisenstein refers to two relevant landmarks in the history of optics: first, to the camera obscura, the darkened box through the aperture of which an object external to it could be projected onto a screen internal to it (the historical prototype of all photography); second, to the designation *objective lens*, a term that arose in the sixteenth century with the invention of compound lenses for telescopes and the need to distinguish and designate their multiple interworking parts—in such multipiece compound lenses, the piece of glass closest to the object being viewed was called *objective*. The designation *objective* subsequently moved back down the chain of terminology to include, since they too corresponded exclusively to the object in question, simple single-element glass lenses, such as those placed in the apertures of camera obscuras. And by the time, centuries later, that the photographic camera—itself essentially a camera obscura in miniature—was invented, the glass focusing device, whether made of a single glass piece or of multiple elements together, took the name *objective*, where it has persisted in most languages (French *l'objectif*, German *das Objectiv*, Russian *ob"ektiv*).[80]

Among other things, Eisenstein is emphatic in the above note that *l'objectif* is anything but objective. The conflation of the optical *objective* and philosophical *objectivity* reads as both intentional and ironic—an irony that he reinforces in the title of this brief note: at the top of the page, we read the heading "Sub"ektiv" [*Le Subjectif*]. From this, we understand that the optical mechanism Eisenstein wishes to describe, and the tense interplay between lens and framed image is rather, by his implication, fundamentally subjective. If the philosophical category of objectivity has been yoked to the epithetical *objective* (i.e., the lens closest to the object), then Eisenstein proposes a new epithet for the lens, the *subjective* (i.e., the lens closest the viewing subject). Here we have a direct slippage between the objective and the subjective, between what might be said to exist as reality—and, by extension, via a perceptual mechanism, to exist as a *real image* (the image projected by a lens onto,

for example, the back of a camera or the retina of the eye)—and that which is subjective, dependent on the mind, an organizing subjectivity, for its existence, an image that manifests intention, inflection.

Further in this note, Eisenstein writes,

> The director's will and intentions are materialized within the quadrangularity (4:5) of the edges of the frame and the F: x" of the piece of ground glass.
>
> The product of the natural mutual relationship a:b becomes a complex fraction that determines the ratio with the frame's proportion (4:5), the distance from the object, the shared inclinations of the subject and the director's will.[81]

The complex formula elaborated here—by which the image of the subject passes (as a prescribed quantity of light waves) through a *circular* piece of polished glass and is projected onto a *quadrangular* frame, producing an image with very specific proportions—is also the process by which the subjective imprint of the director's will is sealed within the image. The spatial tension in this schema recalls some of the earliest queries into light's passage through apertures, such as that of Aristotle, who wondered, "Why does the sun penetrating through quadrilaterals form not rectilinear shapes but circles, as for instance when it passes through wicker-work?"[82]

With Eisenstein, however, we get an optics in which the will and the intention of the one controlling the aperture of the ground-glass device and the film frame (e.g., the film director), takes as equal a part in the creation of the *real image* as does the light passing through the aperture and its focusing by a glass lens. For him, the precision and regimented optics of the ground glass itself are what makes the camera lens—photography's rhetorical claim to objectivity—the inevitably *subjective* tool of the filmmaker. The result of this collision between nature and the director's subjectivity is a "compound fraction," he says, that can be felt not only in the frame's proportions but also in a "distance from the object" that brings the object/subject into mutual inclination with "the director's will." The *real image*, then, does not exist objectively, but rather as the manifestation of subjectivity.

In this passage, Eisenstein not only thematizes glass's optical potential as part of the filmmaking apparatus but also ties it to his ongoing polemic with the "cine-ocular superficiality" that he diagnosed in the claims for truth and objectivity of Dziga Vertov's *kino-eye*. Here, glass becomes the instrument of a vision of tendentiousness—a development

of arguments Eisenstein had made during his debates with Vertov in the Soviet film press of the earlier 1920s. This was unequivocally the case in "The Problem of the Materialist Approach to Form," where he famously uses the figure of the "Cine-Fist" in opposition to the "Cine-Eye" of Vertov's method. There Eisenstein writes, "the important element—the direction (the organization of the audience through organized material) is, in this particular instance of cinema, possible, and not just through the *material* organization of the effective phenomena that are filmed but *optically*, through the actual shooting."[83]

Eisenstein's later invocation of Vertov's *kinoks* in his *Glass House* notes works as a reaffirmation of a program for action, organization, calculation, and partisanship in film technique, as opposed to what he considered the "pantheistic" vision leading to impotent "contemplation" that he saw as the inevitable method of the *kinok*. The ground glass of the lens apparatus is enlisted as a reminder of the subjective organizational processes of film direction—a clear *orientation* toward material—that Eisenstein saw as vital for a truly materialist understanding of the work of art. Vertov's claim for the independent truth value of the individual shot was anathema to Eisenstein, who insisted on the ontological insufficiency of any shot taken on its own. Meaning had always to be produced, specifically in the collision of images and signs; it had to be created, not merely harnessed through carefully arranged intervals of mechanical observation. This rhetorical antinomy that Eisenstein insists on echoes, as Annette Michelson has hinted, Marx's retroactive polemic with Feuerbach who, according to Marx "only interpreted the world" when "the point is to *change* it."[84]

Vive le "Kino-glas"!

This series of notes contra Vertov repeatedly refers to the substance of glass, revealing it to be a crucial material element in the director's conceptual self-definition for this period. In his work notebook of December 1927, amid a series of ideas scribbled in preparation for his essay "Our *October*" (later published in March 1928), Eisenstein argues for making story material relevant to the current day through a "point of view" that itself was current—and that this must be achieved through a contemporary "voice" (*glas*, an archaic form of *golos*). Below this, an arch aphorism appears: *le 'Kino-Glaz' est mort—vive le 'Kino-glas'*![85]

Eisenstein replaces Vertov's kino-eye with a cinema of "voice," another insistence on the necessity of orientation and tendency in the

director's subjectivity—but most fascinating in this passage is the clever implication in the homonyms *glas* and glass. The double meaning is buttressed by the fact that elsewhere in Eisenstein's notebooks of this period the German spelling *glas* or *glaß* is used in reference to *Glass House* and its material, and in other places the film itself is referred to as "*Kino-glaß*." In Eisenstein's November 1927 notes for *Glass House* are several pages written on the material qualities of glass alongside an extended critique of "D-Ziege" (a snide rendering of Dziga as *die Ziege*, German for *goat*) and the mistakes of "*der Kinokismus*" that is all organized under the general heading "*Zum Kinoglaß*."[86] It is clear that this "cinema of glass" was more than just an isolated idea for a single film. On the contrary, in these notes we see glass suggesting itself as one of the keys to Eisenstein's new film signification.

For Vertov, the camera and its lens were the improvement on the perfected version of the human eye, the mechanical ideal of an inadequate organic mechanism—a flawless seeing device that could operate in its "own dimensions of time and space" no longer needing to "copy the work of our eye."[87] Eisenstein, on the contrary, had characterized Vertov's cine-eye figure as a metaphorical hypertrophying of the human eye; he felt that the practical application of this theory of cinematic technique was simply a "*reductio ad absurdum*."[88] For Eisenstein, the organic eye that so famously appears in double exposure with Vertov's mechanical lens is neither a vestige of a frail biology nor a signal of the objective lens's overthrowing of nature's limitation. It is, rather, something in the opposite direction: it must be understood as an image of the organizing functions of perception, of the subjective gaze, and the bringing of visual material into line with the director's will—of the persistence of human pathos within mechanically assisted perception. We might also assume that Eisenstein wished to emphasize the metaphorical unity of the organic lens of the human eye with the glass lenses to be found in photo cameras, the tool tasked with focusing reflected light into a legible—and inflected—image. After all, the human eye (as well as those of birds, fish, reptiles, etc.) works like a camera lens: light passes through an opening (called a pupil), is gathered in a biconvex lens, and then forms a projected image on a surface (the retina).[89] An anecdote about René Descartes seems relevant to the organicity of Eisenstein's cinema-eye: Descartes had once wanted to test the limits of the camera obscura and perform an ocular study by placing the eye of a recently dead human in the aperture of the device and then scraping away the

flesh at the back of the eye until the projected reverse image became visible on the retina.[90]

Glass House allows Eisenstein many opportunities to test such parallels between human and mechanical vision. In scenes such as one in which the shadows of two surreptitious lovers are projected onto the matte glass of a door beyond which a jealous husband is forced to view their silhouetted embraces, we see the building itself become a sort of camera obscura.[91] Or, as in the notes of 18 September 1927, in which one scene is described as "A montage of flashing rooms illuminated from one camera position," the house becomes a magic lantern or the chamber of a film projector, the illuminated frame passing in quick succession before the viewing element.[92] Or, in another note from the same day: Eisenstein describes the view of "movements from one floor to another—'diaphragming'—onto a scene, filmed through the floor—a carpet is rolled out and the actors on the upper floor step onto it, etc."[93] In this case, the multiple planes of glass from floor to ceiling to floor mimic the multiple elements of the cinema lens: these interrelated planes of glass, the space between them, their potential movement and treatment of light determine the viewers' ability to properly see the director's intended subject. As the spectator's vision is focused—the image caught and magnified between these panes of glass—the judicious deployment of a carpet on one of the (glass) floors works together with the glass construction to achieve an iris effect that "stops down" the refracted light—allowing the scene to either fade in or fade out. In these instances, the *Glass House* has, in its way, *become* the camera, and the intricacies of optics—depth of field, lighting, camera angle, focus—all become realized metaphors, manifest spatially in the glass set.

It is in these moments, when the imagined film's central metaphor of infinite vision gains a double significance, when the building conceived for infinite viewing begins *itself* to produce vision, to see, that Eisenstein's cinematic discourse on glass and optics becomes most powerful. In a drawing of 16–17 January 1927, Eisenstein represents the opaque double cars of an elevator moving up and down the height of the glass house, past the dramas of daily life that are taking place in the transparent space beyond. In September of the same year, as part of a list of ideas for *Glass House*, he writes, "And like a spine or a key in the pocket during an X-ray, a black and iron elevator, with dim lights—like all-seeing eyes—permeates the entire home."[94] The movement of these all-seeing elevators, as they ascend and descend past each individually inhabited glass cube, penetrating as they do through all possible angles

of view, is emblematic of the sort of vision Eisenstein intended for the spectators of the film: indeed, the elevators, as constituent parts of the building's structure, and the central point of the panopticon it suggests, double as constituent parts of the viewer's anatomy. In the building in which elevators rove the expanse of vertical space as "all-seeing eyes" and glass walls operate as focusing elements to direct the spectator's gaze, we are given an optical system—not born of the *objectif* that Eisenstein ironized in his notes, but of the *subjectif*, one organized by light and a lens, to be projected onto the film frame by the discursively oriented director.

Eisenstein's thoughts on the objective lens and its determination of a subjective cinematic discourse are tested practically in his distinctive working and theoretical relationship with camera lenses. As Julia Bekman Chadaga suggests, part of Eisenstein's fascination with glass may have been a realization that "he would not be able to make films without this material."[95] Though this may seem a simple answer to a complicated question, it acutely highlights the otherwise underconsidered material function of the glass elements within Eisenstein's favorite lens, the 28mm—a wide-angle lens, and not a portrait or telephoto lens—and which, as he writes in "El Greco y el cine," allowed for the creation of ecstatic imagery. Here, Eisenstein refers to the 28mm lens as the "ecstatic lens *par excellence*," highlighting its "expressive properties" and devoting multiple pages to descriptions of the expressive distortions and depths of field that this lens makes possible.[96] The lens's short focal length also made possible, thanks to the technical skill of cameraman Eduard Tisse, complex work with depth of field and intraframe montage constructions—innovations that clearly gave rise to the ambitious proposals for depth compositions in the *Glass House* project. The depth of field and the effect of the distorted bodies and interiors, bending outward at the edges of the frame, come here as the result of an optical process in which the *circular* wide-angle lens projects its image onto the flat *rectangular* plane of the film; the ecstatic visual phenomenon produced was perceived by Eisenstein as consonant with the elastic forms in the paintings of El Greco and others.

Just as the glass lens of the camera obscura forms the meeting place of an original image and its inverted projection, here the eye represents the meeting place of an "objective" reality and its "subjective" perception, one in which the volitional workings of the perceiving apparatus (the eye) become inextricable from those of the thing viewed; the orientation and intention of the subject totally indivisible from that of the

object. For Eisenstein, both the most basic act of looking and the more complex, mediated optics that develop from it must always conform to this model. In this reasoning, cinema perception does not occur only along a vector that moves from object through impartial lens glass to a receiving subject, but bidirectionally, adding to this vector its opposite: the one that emanates from the perceiving subject through the lens of its choice to the object that it has selected or arranged. The same "indivisibility" or "identification" that happens in primal perception is the quality he imputes to the meeting of subject and object in the camera lens, the *subjectif* of his cinema system. And indeed, between the object and the subject of such a system there is unavoidable slippage—the object comes to stand in for the subject, and vice versa—and therefore ought more appropriately to bear a terminology of subjectivity than one of objectivity.

Years later, the possibility for such subject-projection through glass's transparency would become somewhat more questionable for Eisenstein. In his July 1945 essay "Rodin and Rilke," where he rehearses a brief history of the interplay of architecture and landscape, primarily vis-à-vis the fresco, he refers to the same innovations of glass architecture that he had followed in the 1920s (again he cites Gropius and Le Corbusier), but now with noticeably more skepticism, referring to glass walls as the "fetters" that not only allow for the boundless optical leap from dwelling space into expanse (a similar leap between subjective to objective), but also imprison the resident in a world of mere spectatorship.[97] Another retrospective twist on the project emerges just slightly later than this, in July 1946, less than two years before his death, when Eisenstein writes, "Everyone—once in his life—writes his own mystery play—for me, it's *Glass House*."[98] Such a reading seems to hinge particularly on the later version of the narrative, in which it begins to take on a more easily decipherable plot and characters (the Idealist/Poet, the Architect, the Robot) and the allegorical and metaphorical appear to become ascendant. This interpretation of the project, with its shades of Adam and Eve as the building's residents learn *to see* their metaphorical (or literal) nakedness in a glass paradise, or of the cataclysmic destruction of the glass world and its replacement with a perfected (Marxist) successor, does confirm this tendency toward the traditional Christian mystery play, albeit one refracted through a distinct historical-materialist lens.[99] What prompted this retrospective mythopoeia is hard to know. This flexibility of deep meaning and interpretation (that even these much later reevaluations of the project allow) makes apparent the

truly multivalent quality of *Glass House*. It is a film that its author imagined through multiple instances and iterations, and one that seems to have evolved, for better or worse, beyond the point of pinning down for actual production—despite many attempts to the contrary, no discernible plot or actionable shooting plan ever emerged, and the surge of notes and drawings that had attended the project from its inception in Berlin and through its complication in Moscow had slowed to a trickle by late 1929. Only occasional mentions appear the following year, when its pursuit altogether ceased during Eisenstein's summer in Hollywood.[100] By 1933, the director has securely placed it at the top of his list, the first and most emphatic, of his "unrealized projects."[101]

Chapter 3

Capital

> To Hegel . . . the real world is only the external, phenomenal form of "the Idea." With me, on the contrary, the ideal is nothing else than the material world reflected by the human mind, and translated into forms of thought.
>
> —Karl Marx, *Capital*, second German edition, 1873

It is surprising that, in the several hundred pages of project notes, essay drafts and plans, collaged press images and clippings, diaristic writing, and drawings that make up the notebooks where the *Capital* and *Glass House* plans develop, no direct quotations from any of Marx's works appear, although Eisenstein regularly employs Marx and Marxian principles. Certainly no excerpts from *Capital* appear, either in its German original or in Russian translation. This strange absence reveals something of what we will see as Eisenstein's fundamental approach to the *Capital* project: a focus on the activation of form (the dialectic) and a deemphasizing of the transmission of specific content. It also raises the curious question of what Eisenstein's actual familiarity with Marx's writing might truly have been at the time he initiated these projects.

We have seen that Eisenstein was a declared materialist and that his theoretical essays of the earlier 1920s were rooted in the rhetoric of the dialectical processes undergirding Marxian historical materialism. But more than anything else, the theory that emerges within Eisenstein's early work, moving as it does from theater into cinema and through *Potemkin*, is one that appears more saturated with the context of the Revolution than with any clearly formulated revolutionary political ideology. The materialism that informed both his montage theories

and his desire for an ever more radical cinema output was, it seems, typically deployed in support of formal experimentation and refinement (particularly its implementation to maximum effect on the spectator) *in the context of revolution*, rather than born of revolutionary sociopolitical concern. In other words, we might argue that Eisenstein's Marxism, such as it may have been at the time, was one that revealed a bias toward revolutionary form over the specifics of revolutionary content.[1] Mary Seton, Eisenstein's first biographer, writes that, despite his identification as a "working Bolshevik," he had been part of a milieu in the 1920s in which "few people had read Marxian theory" but in which many "seized on Marx, read a few statements and rushed to interpret this, that or the next thing in the light of a single sentence."[2]

Whatever his education in Marxism might have been in the early 1920s, Eisenstein did experience an organic growth of interest in the classics of historical materialism in the latter part of the decade. By the autumn of 1926, during the first round of shooting on location for *The General Line*, he had begun reading—rapturously—Friedrich Engels's *Dialectics of Nature* (which had appeared in Russian for the first time the year before), and, throughout 1927 and 1928, after his return to Moscow, and in the months that led up to the *Capital* project, he furthered his exploration of historical dialectics by continuing with Engels, examining Georgi Plekhanov's *Fundamental Questions of Marxism*, and then completing a thorough reading of Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks*.[3] Throughout this activity, the conspicuous absence from Eisenstein's notebooks of *any* engagement with Marx's writings suggests that he may not have really read Marx—and indeed, of the many books preserved in Eisenstein's personal library, no edition of *Capital* is present.[4] Even contemporaries at times supported the view that the director had little to no contact with Marx. Indeed, Nikolai Lebedev, a professor at the State Institute of Cinematography, claimed in his 1935 speech in defense of Eisenstein (one of the few) at the All-Union Creative Conference of Soviet Cinema Workers, that Eisenstein's present ideological mistakes could be excused by the fact that he had been too busy with the demands of his great cinema achievements during the 1920s and had only recently had the chance to begin studying Marx's writings with any seriousness—sometime after his return from abroad in 1932 (long after he had ceased working on *Capital*).[5]

Perhaps. But such suppositions are secondary to the way in which the filmmaker viewed *the necessity* of direct conversance with Marx's text as he began his work on the adaptation of it. On 16 November 1927,

amid notes on his two developing projects, a devilish Eisenstein recorded a telling anecdote in his diary: "I slayed the Americans yesterday with my theory on the 'literary' film (as I understand it). But especially with *Capital*, when I said that I have not read *Capital*, but that I have a *method*, a *conception* of the material, and that . . . [I would] figure out the material in question with the method in question."[6]

From this anecdote, regardless of the degree to which the joke ought to be taken literally, Eisenstein makes his attitude about the relationship between "material" and "method" and his disregard for straightforward "literary" adaptation incredibly clear. The content of the book, in this case, is far less important than the way it is told. For Eisenstein, a *conception* (*predstavleniie*) of Marx's method of dialectical materialism was the thing that qualified him to begin imagining a film of *Capital*.

In "Our *October*," Eisenstein performs a genre joke for his reading public, echoing one he had made privately in a notebook entry of late 1927: "This 'capital' work will be made from a 'libretto' by Karl Marx and it will be called: CAPITAL."[7] In a sense, Marx's method, as many of the notes on the *Capital* project bear out, is *the* operative content of the film that Eisenstein planned to make and ought be understood as the "libretto" that the director had apprehended in Marx's philosophy. As material on which to base the new intellectual film, the *form* of Marxian dialectical materialism is recognized as a superlatively capacious method capable of "bring[ing] into focus the full range of changes and interactions that occur in the world" (as Bertell Ollman has put it), and in the case of Eisenstein's actual treatment of the text of Marx's *Capital*, with no concern for fidelity to the specific literary *content* from which that method had arisen.[8] In a sense, Eisenstein's approach to the text is one of avoiding appearances in favor of treating their underlying structures. And yet, it is clear that Eisenstein was not entirely ignorant of some of *Capital*'s specific content, despite his emphasis on method over material; even months later into the project's development (April 1928) he would reiterate, "There is an endless number of themes that could be cinematized from *Capital* ('surplus value,' 'cost,' 'rent')—but the theme that we have wanted to cinematize is Marx's *method*."[9]

Whether or not related to the degree of Eisenstein's possible unfamiliarity with *Capital* as a text, the historian Aleksei Vladimirovich Efimov was contracted to work with the director on the development of a scenario for the film. Efimov, who had already acted as a historical consultant during the production of *October*, was enthusiastic about the prospect of turning *Capital* into a film and wrote to that

effect in an October 1927 letter to Eisenstein: "Having seriously considered the problem of filming *Capital*, I have come to the definitive conclusion that such a production is possible. Capital is movement and it would be most correct to present it in cinema, and afterward, if necessary, on paper. Commodity, for example, apart from everything else, is specifically a *moving* . . . social object—one would have to write about it interminably, but showing it, and rather thoroughly, is possible."[10]

It is apparent from this excerpt that Efimov, the historical expert, shared Eisenstein's faith in the inherent logic of translating Marx's economic theory into film.[11] Efimov locates this cinema-specific benefit in the medium's inherent movement—that this unique feature of film display and perception qualified it even *above* the written word for a clear and potent distillation of *Capital*'s complex theoretical arguments. As the commodities move through the capitalist system, as currency flows, manufacturing develops, and value accumulates, it can be depicted visually, dynamically on screen—and presumably free from certain complexities of systematization or philosophical abstruseness. Eisenstein's developing ideas for the film are firmly rooted in movement too, since his concept of film montage—and the new *Capital*-specific techniques he innovates—themselves are echoes of a Marxian dialectic and are always grounded in a dynamic resolution of conflicts between shots. Most important, though, what the director and the historian both prioritize is the possibility of making Marx speak cinematically, directly to and for the benefit of the average cinema viewer. The valorizing of cinema's potential in this regard is evident in one of Eisenstein's notes on the possible screenplay, in which he offers the inverted formula, "Now, the screenplay ought to be written like a page from Karl Marx. The equivalent in words of what will be cinematically expressed theses."[12] The purpose of this new and tighter discourse, a precisely deployed intellectual cinema, is pedagogical—as Eisenstein writes in a note of 4 April 1928, "The content of *Capital* has been formulated today: (its purpose) is *to teach the worker to think dialectically*."[13]

The foregrounding of method over material content is the essential ingenuity of Eisenstein's adaptation of Marx. And the adaptation was not meant just for *Capital*, but for the next stage of cinema's development: "in the new cinema, the seat of the 'eternal themes' (the academic themes: 'Love and Duty,' 'Fathers and Children,' 'The Triumph of the Virtuous,' etc.) will be taken by a series of pictures on the topics of 'the basic methods.' "[14] Classical and even avant-garde

concepts of *theme* have vanished in this formulation along with any sense of traditional story (*siuzhet*), and what fills the onscreen vacuum is a series of dynamic images, that are, as Naum Kleiman and Leonid Kozlov write, "capable of making visible the actual dialectic of class war and societal development."[15] Making concepts visible, making concepts move—this is the task of the imagined film, and Eisenstein approached it with the devout belief that his "new cinema" was up to the challenge.[16] The motion of film—its dynamic arrangement of images, its careful deployment of montage correlations and collisions—would reveal the hidden economic and political movements of capital. *Capital* would not only demonstrate but would, vitally, *enact* the dialectical method. Viewers would follow commodities in production, in distribution, in exchange; they would witness the raising of capital, its accumulation, and its perpetuation and, intellectually participating in these movements and associations, they would be incorporated into the dialectical critique as Marx's concepts and methods moved to the screen.

Between the Tragedy and the Essay

The form of *Capital*—both in its preparatory materials and in their projected final product—was to be categorically new. A "cinema treatise," a *kinotraktat*, was the genre Eisenstein coined for this film that would manifestly be neither fiction nor nonfiction, neither "played" nor "nonplayed" (in the idiom of the time).[17] The exact meaning of *cinema treatise* would likely have had to be articulated and solidified through the course of the actual shooting and montage of the film, but its structure was explicitly predicated on the draining of all anecdotal and emotional value from the material the film would depict in favor of the more scientific tone associated with a treatise. In other words, the onscreen facts were meant to be met not as events unfolding in some diegetic space but as *theses* for an organized concept. To position the unit of filmic depiction as a thesis and not as a narrative event required a delicate reworking of the director's own conceptions of the categories of form and content—this is something he worked out in his notes for the project and articulated fully in his 1929 essay "Perspectives." There, inspired by Plekhanov's suggestion that words be studied at the point of their emergence in the productive base and not in the context of the superstructure, Eisenstein traces the deep etymologies of both *content* and *form*. "How many bayonets have, for instance, been broken on the

question of 'form and content'! All because the dynamic, active and effective *act* of 'content' [*soderzhanie*] as 'holding it between ourselves' [*sderzhivanie mezhdu soboi*] has been replaced by an amorphous, static and passive understanding of content as *contents* [*soderzhimoe*]."[18]

And further:

> You have only to look in . . . a dictionary of "foreign words," and you will see that form in Russian is *obraz* or "image." Where "image" [*obraz*] itself is a hybrid of the concepts "cut" [*obrez*] and "disclosure" [*obnaruzhenie*]. These two terms brilliantly describe form from both points of view: from the individually static (*an und für sich*) point of view as "cut" [*obrez*], the isolation of a particular phenomenon from others that may be present. . . . "Disclosure" [*obnaruzhenie*] characterizes image from a different, socially active standpoint: it "discloses," i.e., establishes the social link between a particular phenomenon and what surrounds it.[19]

In both acts of definition, Eisenstein insists on the active, operative quality of these terms.[20] In the case of content, he focuses on that which is actively contained; in the case of form, he enacts a dialectical relationship between the phenomenon removed from its surroundings (in order to be viewed in itself) and its simultaneous "disclosure" or return to its surroundings. Content and form here work together as organizational principles oriented to the cognitive *movement* of the spectator—"The principle by which thought is organized is, in actual fact, the 'content' of a work."[21]

As Eisenstein develops his ideas in support of the *Capital* project, form and content are radicalized into a method of *ideology*, a way of *containing* and *forming* the viewer's cognitive movement.[22] Eisenstein asks here, "Where is the difference? Where is the abyss between the tragedy and the essay? Is not the *point of both to provoke internal conflict and in its dialectical resolution to supply the receiving masses with a new stimulus toward activity and the means of creating life?*"[23] Intellectual cinema, in Eisenstein's evolving definition of it, is the cinema in which this false abyss is elided, in which the same principles that inform the composition of essay or political oratory can inform the composition of a feature-length film. Indeed, piling on more new terminology for his new cinema, Eisenstein calls *October* (in certain portions) and the imminent *Capital* instances of "conversation film" (*konversatsionnaia fil'ma*).[24] This term has been translated in some places as "discursive film," which does capture the rhetorical thrust of the format but

perhaps misses the essentially active, dialogic, omnidirectional quality that the original implies.[25]

Eisenstein further characterizes his "new form of cinema," as "a collection of 'essays' on a series of themes," the format of which is justified, he argues, by the assumption that *all* works are inclined to emphasize and promote certain ideas over others and that by engaging this tendency directly, the conversation film justifies and renews the rhetorical device.[26] As Eisenstein begins to work out how the "essays" or "theses" of his increasingly complex film might be structured together, a model appears in his notes: the story collection *Faits divers* by French communist writer Henri Barbusse, who had given Eisenstein a copy of the book upon its January 1928 publication (in French).[27] On the 31st of that month, Eisenstein writes, "*Voyez* Barbusse *Faits divers—L'instituteur*. The book is just stunning. I'm ready to take back everything bad I've said about Barbusse. I read it for three hours straight in the night. There is much of use in it for *Capital*."[28] Though some of Eisenstein's interest may have related to the content of Barbusse's book—"a collection of impassioned arraignments of cruel reactionary governments . . . so-called democracies" according to one contemporary reviewer—the structure of the collection was of greatest value for *Capital*.[29]

The title of Barbusse's collection is taken from the standard section of a French newspaper where brief, unconnected news stories, often concerning sensational topics, appear under the heading *Faits divers*—current events as brief and miscellaneous facts. In Barbusse's handling, the term is applied with irony to a set of brutal and tendentious stories in which he reports on various abuses in capitalist societies across the globe. Eisenstein recognizes in the careful arrangement of the collection's ideologically pointed and emotionally powerful stories the possibility for modularity and combination that would fully suit the required dynamism of the intellectual film: "The form of a *Faits divers* or collection of short cine-*essais* is quite appropriate as a replacement for full-length works."[30]

Material Ideal: Marx's Method

Essential to the function of Marx's dialectical method is the question of combination—which conflicting elements need to be brought into correlation (violent or otherwise) in order to produce the necessary synthetic and revelatory meaning. For Eisenstein's *Capital*, this question, as with all his deliberation over montage structure in his previous

films, was crucial both at the level of broad, overarching structure and at the level of specific, local combination. The principles of intellectual montage, as discovered in the composition of *October*, dictated certain priorities when planning how specific passages might collide with those contiguous to them. Formerly, montage had been oriented toward a "single emotion" from a montage of "sensuous attractions"; now, by contrast, montage was to be oriented toward the provoking of "a single concept" in which combined units would be united not by their external similarities but by their meaning.[31] Eisenstein illustrates this with the familiar example of a passage from *October*, the so-called gods sequence. There is no outward similarity between a baroque figure of Christ and a wooden idol, but they *mean* the same thing—and this is a meaning that is derived from an abstract social conditioning. Similarly, a Menshevik and a *balalaika* have nothing in common physically, but an abstract connection can be made on the basis of their semantic definitions.

Similar processes are hinted at in the material prepared for *Capital*. In another section of the notes, Eisenstein alludes to a passage that was to include the juxtaposition of China, the Egyptian pyramids, and New York City carrying an insinuation of a certain concept about the capitalist economy. He reminds his reader: "But one must remember that [montage pieces from China] are not here with the intention of *revealing China*, but through combination with other pieces—New York, Egypt—to reveal a single thought."[32] It becomes clear, as we imagine the movement from passage to passage, across images externally disparate but synthesizing in their combined meaning, how such a structure was meant to lead the viewer through a sort of active, dialectical thinking—another reminder that in *Capital*, method trumps material. The dialectical creation of meaning through superficially conflicting images, attendant abstract associations, and an ultimate concrete conceptual synthesis, coalescing and productive, demonstrates Eisenstein's belief that if the method is properly followed, the material itself will fall in line, that all social realities will be processed and analyzed properly—and that, indeed, he would "figure out the material in question with the method in question."

Of course, this was to be the form of the eventual film, one that we know was never made; what follows from that knowledge is the question of how the method appeared, then, in the preparatory materials themselves, the documents that detail the process of Eisenstein imagining the eventual picture. Does the *cinematizing of Marx's method*

begin on the page? Between October 1927 and April 1928, Eisenstein compiled (with help from Grigori Alexandrov) a mass of additional notebook materials earmarked for potential integration into the *Capital* film structure—articles, news clippings, scribbled notes, drawings, photographs. The scope of the material included in these files is vast and multiform, encompassing an article on the fishing trade in Norway; a political cartoon lampooning American scientific imperialism; a clipping from *Vecherniaia Moskva* about François Coty, the French chauvinist publisher of *Le Figaro*; a feature on industrialist Basil Zakharov; notes on such specific topics as payday drunkenness in working-class England; the quashing of a worker's uprising in Berlin; Gustav Krupp's warmongering; and the inhumanities visited on the worker by Fordism—all this, in addition to many notes on other current projects (most commonly *Glass House* and *The General Line*).[33] Scattered across other notebooks from this time are other materials that, despite their disparateness, seem to fall under the canopy of *Capital*'s concerns: complicated graphs describing the dynamics of mise-en-scène and gesture, sketches made in illustration of kabuki scenes, dirty jokes and ribald poems, and so on.[34] It is not just the breadth of these reference points—across time, space, form, magnitude—that is striking, but the way in which they break upon one another, their proximity and the possibilities of their combination. Such disparate materials, destined or not for literal representation in the future film of *Capital*, suggest themselves as the *faits divers*, the modular and self-contained thematic units that would feed through the dialectical montage of the project's method.

In the context of the notebooks, we may see Eisenstein's intellectual montage already at work—and not just as a static prevision of the intended film, but as an already active process wherein disparate ideas and impulses force the notebook-reader into a dialectical thought pattern, combining and synthesizing potential meanings. A typical instance as an example: a notebook page from 23 February 1928 consists of a collage of two seemingly unrelated handwritten notes, a figure drawing, and two pasted-in newspaper items. The first of Eisenstein's notes regards the vulgarization of film language (with glancing reference to Kozintsev and Trauberg's 1926 *The Overcoat* and Kote Mardzhanishvili's 1927 adaptation of Stefan Zweig's *Amok*); the other is on "unmotivated vestiges," and it quotes, in French, a description of English formal men's attire in which the hair ribbon is sewn directly into the back of a man's jacket and "does not touch the hair at all." This note is accompanied by a meticulous drawing of a male figure from behind, the jacket

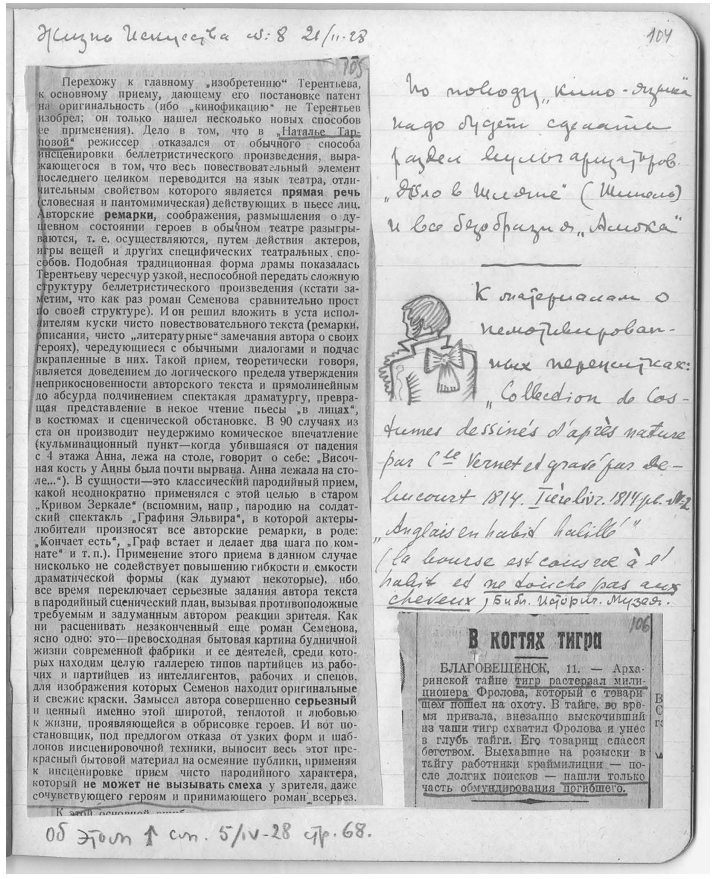


Figure 5.1. A page from Eisenstein's working notebook, 23 February 1928. RGALI 1923-2-1105, 104–6. Used with permission.

and bow in close approximation to its source in an early nineteenth-century French catalog of fashion drawings (which the director had apparently found in the library of the State Historical Museum).[35] The smaller of the two news clippings is a short and sensational item titled "In the Tiger's Claws" reporting how "the millionaire Frolov" was torn to pieces by a tiger in Arkharinsk; the larger clipping, taking up half the notebook page, is a recent critical review by Stefan Mokulsky in *Zhizn' iskusstva* of Igor Terentiev's stage production of *Natalya Tarpova*.[36]

All these seemingly unrelated threads come together in a visual constellation on the page, and the reader is forced to make sense of their interrelation. Closer observation reveals that Eisenstein has made two pointed interventions: in the costume description, he has underlined

the fact that the man's close-cropped hair is not touched by the perfunctory hair ribbon, and in the article on the tiger attack, he has underlined the detail that only a part of the millionaire's clothing was discovered. An immediate series of possible connections spring up: the effacement of the organic body, the material vestige of its presence, the devaluation or distillation of capital into scraps of clothing. The review of Terentiev's production highlights its novel device wherein actors recite aloud all stage directions related to their character, producing uncanny moments such as when the heroine, lying dead on the stage, having thrown herself from a building, declaims, "Anna's temporal bone was nearly torn out. She lay on the table."

The character's voice, as residue of its deceased and segmented body, resounds tangibly before the audience, again a kind of uncanny vestigial phenomenon, but here deployed as a device for the renewal of theatrical mise-en-scène. The review of the performance begins with some observations on Terentiev's radical approaches to staging and on his "cinefication" of theater space, a concept from which the leap to Eisenstein's note (handwritten in a column alongside) on the vulgarization of film language—the encroachment of noncinematic form into the cinema—becomes manageable: both films he lists in the note are adaptations of novels by former theater directors who had perhaps not quite shed the vestigial traces of their backgrounds in other forms. Making the logic more pronounced, Eisenstein would return to this page more than a month later, leaving an additional note in the bottom margin, an arrow pointing to the theater review, instructing the reader to cross-reference with another diary entry from 5 April. There he further discusses Terentiev's fundamental misunderstanding of what he considers theater's "organic quality" (producing a sensual response in the spectator), after which he jumps twenty pages in the notebook to point out that, with the scene of the St. Petersburg bridges being raised in *October*, he had successfully achieved what Terentiev had failed to do onstage.[37]

Discrete units of information, mostly contained on one page, all vaguely organized around concepts of film language, of old forms being reinvigorated through new ones, of vestigial old forms persisting past their usage point—this entire complex of visual and textual impulses demonstrates Eisenstein's developing technique of enacting Marx's dialectic. The disparate images and textual forms expose the observer to a series of conditional facts, provoking associations that gradually distill—the more the material is processed—into a clearer synthetic

knowledge. In this case, the synthesis produces concepts that address both the demands of the new cinema and an underlying economic argument about obsolescence and the residual value of objects and forms. Such syntheses are only strengthened in the context of the surrounding pages in which notes on death, bodily remains, the banality of form, and strange bodily adornments appear. Such dialectical montage processes are evident throughout the notebooks. A page might juxtapose two cutouts from a March 1928 issue of *Die Woche* to ironize the display value of the human body under imperialism: on the one hand, images of wax figures from a London museum disfigured in a fire and, on the other, the small metal cage on wheels in which Sultan Abdelhafid of Morocco kept pretender to the throne Bou Hmara imprisoned before his execution in 1909. Another page might visually link the vestige of ritual that lingers in mass-produced decorative Easter bunnies with a row of black-cassocked Catholic priests seated glumly on a park bench and masked Sierra Leonian "devils" in order to historicize fetish object and religious raiment.[38]

The potential material that can be plugged into Eisenstein's *Capital* truly appears endless. And while these notebooks were not strictly devoted to the *Capital* project, and their contents should not all be understood as potential components of the imagined film itself, it is the very interlacing and copresence of seemingly unrelated material with material that *was* unmistakably designated for the project that inscribes nearly *everything* in the notebooks into a potentially productive dialectical relationship that—as in the filmmaker's constant refrain—asserts method as *the* defining factor of *Capital*'s preparation, and not its specific material. As Eisenstein writes in November 1927, "meaning arises in the combination, and not in the absolute value of any independent part."[39] And in his sketching out of this process in his notebooks, what often emerges as most formally powerful is his tendency to choose material that appears superficially unrelated and thus for which, once the underlying link is discovered, performs powerfully as a constituent of the dialectic. In other words, the greater the distance between what seems to be incommensurable on the surface, the greater their rhetorical force once they are made commensurable.

Eisenstein came to realize that the local montage of material into such emergent concepts, however, would require a larger skeleton for concepts to adhere into an integrated feature-length film. Accordingly, his notes present two prevailing designs for an overarching structure to be applied to the series of discursive essays: the first appears in a note

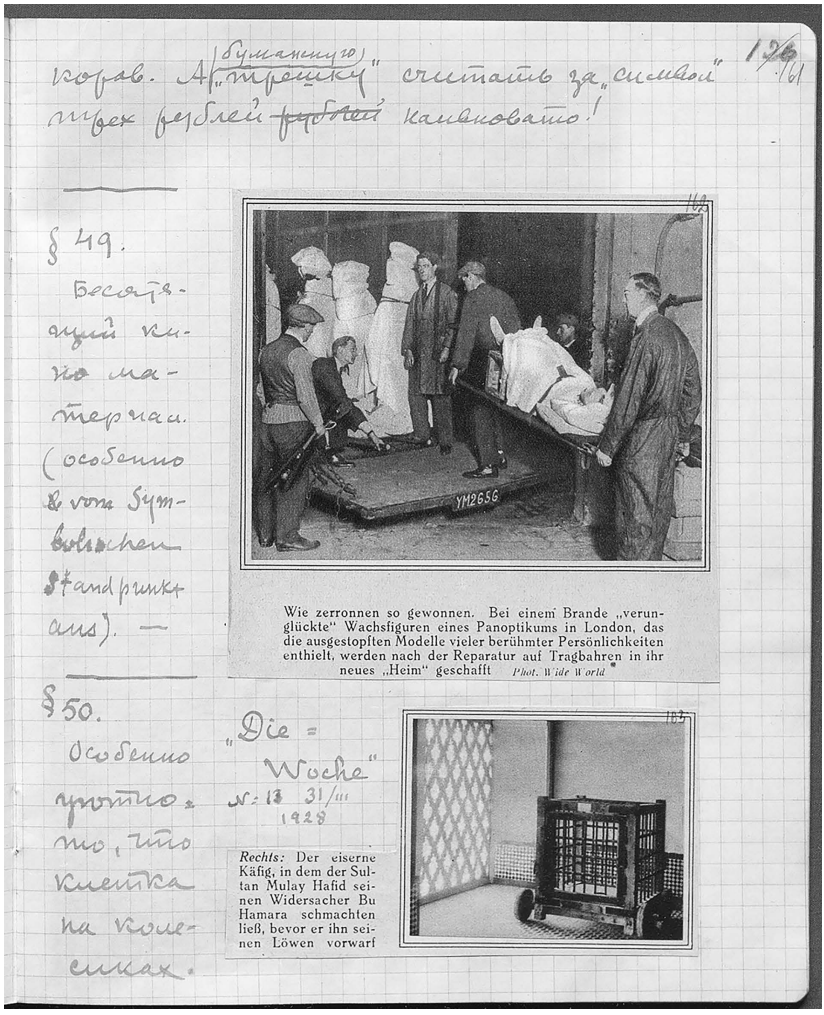

корав. А „трещку" (бумажную) считать за „синюю"
всех рублей ~~работ~~ каллиграфировать!
§ 49.
Бесспорный кинематериал.
(особенно в том символическом стандпункте).
§ 50.
Особенно хронометрично, что клетка на колесиках.
„Die Woche"
№ 13 31/III 1928
Wie zerronnen so gewonnen. Bei einem Brande „verunglückte" Wachsfiguren eines Panoptikums in London, das die ausgestopften Modelle vieler berühmter Persönlichkeiten enthielt, werden nach der Reparatur auf Tragbahren in ihr neues „Heim" geschafft Phot. Wide World
Rechts: Der eiserne Käfig, in dem der Sultan Mulay Hafid seinen Widersacher Bu Hamara schmachten ließ, bevor er ihn seinen Löwen vorwarf

Figure 5.2. Two pages from Eisenstein's working notebooks, 8 April and 19 April 1928. RGALI 1923-2-1107, 161–63, and 1923-2-1108, 44–54. Used with permission.

OSTERN
„A. I. Z."
JAHRGANG VII NR. 15
Berlin, 15. 4. 28
Osterhasen, Ostereier — daß große Geschäft um das Osterfest
Bondu-Teufel der Sierra Leone. Diese Teufel hat dort jedes Dorf. Sie sind in merkwürdige Gewänder aus Rasigeflecht gekleidet. Die Eingeborenen verehren und fürchten sie und schreiben ihnen eine uneingeschränkte Macht zu.
Aber das, was vor vielen Jahrhunderten immerhin noch Glaube, Fanatismus oder Begeisterung und Hingebung für ein ganz bestimmtes Ethos war, ist heute lediglich und ausschließlich Politik, Politik im Interesse der herrschenden Klasse: der Bourgeoisie. Und dann ist es, außer dieser Politik, ein Geschäft. Es haben sich im Laufe der Zeit ganze Industrien um dieses Ostern herum entwickelt. Ganze Industrieen, die mit Osterhasen, Ostereiern und anderen netten Dingen an den religiösen Illusionen zu profitieren versuchen und tatsächlich auch profitieren.
Man braucht sich nur die hier wiedergegebenen vier Kuttenträger anzusehen, und man wird begreifen, daß dieses Predigervolk, diese Verkünder der „Frohen Osterbotschaft" allem, ja allem anderen eher zuneigen, als der von Christus geforderten Entsagung und Menschenliebe.
So sehen sie aus — die Prediger der christlichen „Nächstenliebe"

Figure 5.2. (Continued)

of 6 April 1928, where Eisenstein calls for the "banal unfolding of a perfectly irrelevant event." The idea he proposes is "a day in a person's life, or maybe something even more vapid."[40] Each link in the freestanding chain that makes up this story was meant to serve as a possible departure point for a series of outwardly oriented conceptual associations—each one an example of the dialectical essay just described. The slight underlying story unfolds on a sort of mundane horizontal narrative axis composed of points that provoke digressions and lead the viewer into generalized, abstracted thought, launching them vertically to the "models of the dialectical relationship toward phenomena."[41] The banal sequence of quotidian events operating as a spine for successive departures into conceptual abstraction was something Eisenstein saw successfully demonstrated in James Joyce's *Ulysses*, reviews of which he copied out into the notebook containing his *Capital* notes.[42] The digressive-associative structure is the undeniable connection between Eisenstein's and Joyce's projects, and the proposed format of Eisenstein's "day in the life" has its obvious parallels with the chaotic events of Bloomsday in *Ulysses*. Although the filmmaker does not explicitly develop the connection to *Ulysses* beyond this, he would subsequently write that he wished to dedicate the "formal" aspects of the future film to James Joyce.[43]

Another literary model that Eisenstein explores as a relevant touchstone is the frame story, including *One Thousand and One Nights* or Wilhelm Hauff's *Die Geschichte von dem kleinen Muck*, in which one banal, protracted narrative (Scheherezade attempts to avoid execution; members of a caravan ward off boredom and fear in their nighttime encampment) serves as the horizontal spine along which multiple tales are told as vertical departures. One example in particular of such a compositional structure, the Persian *Tutinama* or *Tales of a Parrot*, is mentioned multiple times—perhaps because the narratives that radiate outward from its frame (a parrot telling tales to its owner on fifty-two consecutive nights) are didactic in nature, meant to persuade the owner, and by extension the reader, not to commit immoral acts. This structure fits Eisenstein's developing conception perfectly: a hackneyed, freestanding, and concrete story from which abstracted concepts are delivered with pedagogical force—apparently, he esteemed *Tutinama* so much that he considered his own early attempts at structuring *Capital* to be "not bad, but a bit foul compared to *Tutinama*."[44]

At the end of the note in which these thoughts on structure occur, Eisenstein settles on the image of a German housewife preparing soup

for her worker-husband. He composes the image, at first, as an instance of how the banal can stand in such stark contrast to the radical: the hot soup prepared by the wife, available to the worker at the end of the day, operates as the "strongest obstacle to a revolutionary uprising," the hot food just enough to keep the worker passive.[45] The next day (after discussing the structural idea with Alexandrov) Eisenstein develops the image of the German housewife into the banal spinal structure, capable of supporting the sequence of digressive dialectical essays. As if to answer the question "what were the economic processes that produced this pacifying soup?" Eisenstein attempts to reveal the invisible origins of externally unremarkable phenomena by moving from the superficial events of daily life to the origins of all that makes that life materially possible.

The German woman is now imagined preparing the soup throughout the entire length of the film. At each stage of this commonplace process (we see this outlined in Eisenstein's writing), the operation is to be interrupted by associative digressions that explore (dialectically) the sources and processes of production. As she adds pepper to the soup, the chain of cinematic associations builds: "Pepper. Cayenne. Devil's Island. Dreyfus. French chauvinism. *Figaro* in Krupp's hands. War. A port full of sinking ships. . . . It would be great to cover up the sunken English ships with the lid of the pot."[46] Here we see the intellectual movement outward, away from the original narrative theme, as the pepper is added to the soup. And we see also how the viewer's thoughts are meant to return, neatly, after passing through this process, to the original spine of the story, as the housewife covers the soup with its lid. Eisenstein is explicit about the variability of these ideas: although pepper is his first impulse for the building of this chain of associations, it might as easily be done with the kerosene used to light the flame over which the soup pot sits, and a subsequent departure into images of global oil production and exchange.[47] The pepper is one of many possible impetuses away from the soup: the kerosene for the stove could lead into an investigation of oil production, for example. Or as a "comedic, farcical" contrast to such chains of resource manipulation, a shot of the woman's legs in tattered stockings that then cuts to "silk stockings in a newspaper advertisement. A stuttering movement begins, and they multiply into fifty pairs of legs. A *revue*. Silk. Art. The battle for a centimeter of stocking. Aesthetes are for it. The bishopric and morality are against it. But these puppets dance on the strings of the silk manufacturers

and the garment sellers that fight them."[48] Here, culture's surface dynamic—the lovers of art battle the lovers of God—is shown to be meaningless against the base economics that determine the movement of commodity.

Finally, as the worker-husband returns home to his wife and for his soup, his proletarian pathos is extinguished. He partakes of the warming (if thin) soup. What follows is a building cavalcade of intellectual montage, in which bloody encounters are set against social indifference: "Blood, the world in cataclysm. The salvation army. The militant church, etc. The man embraces his wife's skeletal frame. A tattered blanket is pulled neatly over them. 'A surprise' (sincerely lyrical). She gives him a two-bit cigarette. A sentimentality that is the more nightmarish for coming at the end of all the horrors. The blanket is pulled all the way over. And under the bed—a [chamber] pot. With its handle broken off. But, all the same, it is still a pot."[49]

Here, the abstraction of the dialectical disclosures is couched in the quintessence of bourgeois banality—a poverty-tinged domestic bliss. But the important final image—of the chamber pot—circles the viewer back to the central narrative of soup, slowly boiling in its pot. Just as the processes of commodity procurement and distribution are shown, so are the equivalent processes of human consumption: having labored their share, the couple retires to their bed, concealed by a bedspread of modesty, and the viewers are left to contemplate the endpoint of the soup's constituent parts, the piss-pot under the bed, with its circular rim summoning the image of the circular rim of the soup pot. This is most likely an attempt at what Eisenstein had earlier hoped for in the final moment of the film: "a dialectical decoding of this main story which itself does not relate to the real theme." In other words, the preparation of soup, which had been taken as a handy instance of domestic commonplace, the horizontal process, is finally itself broken down—appearing as a highly fraught image of class struggle—and reinscribed into the complex rhetoric of political-economic tendency established by the vertically developing essays to which it had given rise.

These three rough sketches for digressive, associative theses demonstrate the principle that Eisenstein determined necessary for the structure to operate with potency. A true stimulus to move away from the story arises if the "maximal amount of abstraction in the unfolding concept appears in particularly strong relief when it comes as an offshoot from the maximally concrete—the brutishly banal."[50] This discursive dynamism hinges on scale for its effect: the further the conceptual

distance traveled, the stronger the argument. As in the simple montage of film frames, the starkest shift is felt when moving through maximum conflict; in *Capital*, this comes as sharp movement from the banal to the extraordinary, from the local to the universal, from private sentiment to global exchange. As the viewer sees the movement of commodities through space and their transformation from one form to another, the historian Efimov's argument that cinema is suited above all mediums to trace and display the complex, often invisible movement of capital through the phenomenal world turns out to be essential.[51] Indeed, it is the successful apprehension of this movement and metamorphosis that renders the material visible.[52]

Visible Chain, Hidden Links

The tension between the invisible and its optical revelation, between the immaterial and the material, is central both to Marx's economic theory and to Eisenstein's cinematic exploitation of it. If Marx's dialectical process leads from visible daily phenomena to the hidden processes and resources at the origin of this reality's production, then in the context of cinema, a medium that must operate according to a strictly literal code of hidden and visible, the question of depiction becomes critical.

The most basic form of the dialectic—the presentation of a thesis, its negation by an antithesis, the collision of the two stimulating a synthetic resolution, which is then itself susceptible to the same process, and so on—presupposes two concrete statements (thesis and antithesis) and an abstract third conception (synthesis). This third space of synthesis is the immaterial domain of materialist thought construction, the place for abstracted confrontations of concrete thoughts, the features of which grow ever more concrete through ongoing juxtaposition. As we have seen, Eisenstein's combinations of essays or series of theses operate according to a logic of association by which causally disjointed progressions (pepper–cayenne–Devil's Island–Dreyfus–*Le Figaro*) are meant to model dialectical thought. What is shown is a chain of socioeconomic phenomena—what is not shown, what is not made explicit, is what connects these individual units of the chain, the meaning-heavy synthesis of the material presented. One might say the chain is visible, but what constitutes its links is not.

This invisible intellectual space of linkage is something that Eisenstein would formulate specifically in terms of temporality in his 1929 essay "The Fourth Dimension in Cinema," his most thorough explication

of montage to that point. There, he assigns the operative space for the movements of intellectual cinema to "the centers of higher nervous activity." To establish the grounds for the intellectual abstractions of his intellectual cinema, Eisenstein cites Lenin's complication of the Hegelian dialectic: "an infinite process of deepening . . . from appearances into essence and from the less profound to the more profound essence."[53] This is a cognitive movement toward abstract concepts that travels from the more visible to the less visible.

Whereas Eisenstein's earlier theories of montage had operated according to a kind of emotional reflexology in which affective triggers were to cause sympathetic responses in viewers, the movement of intellectual montage—from concrete images into abstract concepts—arises from an "intellectual stimulation" that incites a dialectical process "in the tissues of the higher nervous system of the cognitive apparatus."[54] This is reiterated in another essay of 1929, "Beyond the Shot," in which Eisenstein claims that "the combination of two 'representable' objects achieves the representation of something that cannot be graphically represented."[55] Here, the director uses the example of Japanese written characters and their combination to illustrate how one depicted hieroglyph (as he calls it), one that refers to a specific object or fact, when juxtaposed with another hieroglyph (also referring to an object or fact), gives rise to a corresponding concept that may not be intrinsic to either hieroglyph. For Eisenstein, this concept emerges as if from "a different dimension."

In the *Capital* project, the combination of depictable units (e.g., pepper cultivation in Cayenne cut with the penal colony on Devil's Island) necessitates a leap in cognition that is not assisted by any depictable material: the viewer must make the association between the agricultural exploitation of French imperial holdings and the very similar exploitation of human material resources in their penal colonies. The concept of violent control and exploitation is the uniting fulcrum between these material, filmable elements and this dialectical connection cannot, by definition, be filmed, although it is itself the essence of the film.

The Sequence Is Not Sequential

The focus on a lack of logical sequentiality in the development of the conceptual essays, and the insistence on their tangential movement outward from the trivial spinal narrative (day in the life, cooking of

soup) organizing them reveals Eisenstein seeking an ever more powerful montage mechanism. As the director expresses in his *Capital* notes, relationships between the linked events of story units that are "unfolded, logically advancing" do not allow for the more intense collision possible between independent values that an "associatively advancing" development would.[56] These thoughts, expressed in notes of mid-1928, appear as a complement to another instance in Eisenstein's theory, in which he emphasizes perpendicular association over logical coherence. His famous July 1928 proposal, with Alexandrov and Vsevolod Pudovkin, the "Statement on Sound," argues that audiovisual combinations ought always to work not in logical support of one another, but rather through contrast and collision, with the audio montage units deployed at an angle oblique to the image. Eisenstein calls for an audiovisual corollary to *Capital*'s plot reformulation, emphasizing the fragmentary nature of the audio montage unit, and using the lack of logical, realistic adherence to the image to emphasize its associative quality: "only the contrapuntal use of sound vis-à-vis the visual fragment of montage will open up new possibilities for the development and perfection of montage."[57] This counterpoint, a perpendicular movement of the audio unit toward and away from the horizontally progressing visual image, suggests the same model of a spinal thread punctuated by ever-complicating tangential outgrowths.[58] The unifying principle is one in which the intervening montage elements—whether audio units or associative theses—operate with an autonomy capable of disrupting the temporal sequentiality that had previously constituted the very essence of the continuous film image.[59]

Ultimately, the logical gap created between the linked montage units is a space of potential energy for dialectical thinking. With the lack of logical correspondence between images, a conflict is produced, and conflict (along with its resolution) is—per Eisenstein—the crux of the dialectic and of its concrete cinematic form. This is the intellectual montage that came to be defined in the *Capital* project: the leading of viewers through carefully arranged nonsequential sequences, making possible a guided dialectical thinking. As a self-conscious method, it was to provoke its audience to pierce through the veil not only of the political and economic realities Marx had addressed in his written critique, but also of film signification itself, since montage, like the dialectic, is a process that always refers to its own movement.

As the project develops further, Eisenstein, ever restless, expresses in his notes a need to push the material into even more radical political

territory: "*NB*. Everything written down [in the 'soup' narrative] is still *monstrously* doubtful. It is all still so reactionary! And it might only be good for one specific event, stylistically. We need events that are more 'leftist' (like [*October*'s] 'gods')."[60]

Even in draft form, Eisenstein finds his spinal narrative—the best he could come up with—to be "completely moronic."[61] As a working model used to develop the method and put it into practice, it was pragmatic. But the director felt the need to continuously purify the method: "*Capital*, as it appears in this outline, does not represent *the extreme limit of new possibilities*. This must be remembered firmly. Perhaps, however, it should be put into action *at this stage*."[62] Despite the need for action, the director realized that the main realm of his method not fully ready was that of pathos. His cinema treatise was governed by a system of dialectically developing intellectual stimuli, and only late in the project—despite what he had emphasized in his previous notes about the need to move away from affect-oriented montage principles—did he realize the need for a contravening measure of emotional stimulus.

The realization comes most poignantly in a note of 20 April 1928, after what seem to have been some discussions about *Capital* with the Sovkino administration.[63] Here Eisenstein wonders, ruefully, "Look at what happens with the 'pure maidens' *du moment* whenever I begin speaking of *Capital* and the intellectual attraction! The secretary of the art council of Sovkino . . . and a [representative] of the agitprop organization of the Comintern . . . both advise against it. . . . They both are for the emotionality of my work. They speak of 'the warmth' which must be preserved in my works. [That must be] created. . . . *Très drôle*. These 'pure in heart'—spake they the truth?"[64]

In response to this opposition to a pure intellectual abstraction, Eisenstein decides that "from now on" the intellectual attraction would not exclude "emotionality," recalling that the presence of any type of affect was important to basic reflexology—and it is telling too that the category of affect he settles on first is laughter, recalling the *Lachsalven* that met *October*'s Kerensky section when it was first shown.[65] This sense that the structure of *Capital* could incorporate a comic element connects back to a note of 3 April 1928, in which Eisenstein writes, "After all, there is a tendency in *Capital* that does not exclude the comedic."[66] It is, of course, easy to imagine an Eisensteinian comedic passage in the possible farcical middle section with the German housewife's stockings, and the absurd battle between modes of beauty and morality. The director even thought it might be "funny" to offer the role of the

housewife to Alexandra Khokhlova—the famously expressive comedic actress from Kuleshov's films, a face that could suggest both beauty and freakishness.[67] By 22 April 1928, Eisenstein has seemingly settled into conceiving of a conceptual space for affect (even beyond the comedic) in the developing project: in a newspaper clipping about the overrunning of Rome by pilgrims mourning the death of Pius IX in 1878, he highlights a passage describing the unavailability of mourning dress in all of Rome and its suburbs—that it was impossible for instance to buy black gloves. Next to this, the director has written, "And this is great for *Capital*, under the rubric of 'the dialectic of emotions.' "[68]

Despite his conviction about the correctness of his formal direction, Eisenstein seems to have read the disappointment of the Sovkino elders (at his emphasis on intellectual process and material function over emotional force) as an emphatic sign that the time was not yet ripe to pursue *Capital*. A sign that the audience—here modeled by studio administration—was not prepared to move according to the dialectic he was planning. This, along with the confusion and trepidation of his assistant and collaborator Alexandrov, seems to have been enough to encourage Eisenstein to give the project time to mature.[69] It was imperative that the project be done properly. As we have seen, *Glass House* was to have been a conceptual proving ground for *Capital*—the film he believed he really needed to get right, the pure instance of intellectual film.

Never Mind, It Will Come!

The quest for a suprarational, nonsequential cinematic narrative—one that could be associative, guided only by an energetic historical materialism—seems to have been a thrilling release from the restrictions of the popular cinema, and more particularly from the dichotomous concepts of narrative and nonnarrative film (played and nonplayed), a paradigm that was becoming ever less useful for Eisenstein. And yet, the difficulties in both conceptual form and practical possibility that arose as a result of these radical explorations seem to have prevented even a proper scenario from being written for either project. Sequences of carefully oriented images, lined up by historical and associative correlation and eventually building to a sort of intellectual crescendo, create a signifying structure that vastly diverges from the director's previously expressed concepts about the proper methods for preparing film scripts. In neither *Capital*'s nor *Glass House*'s remnants is there

anything that approaches the literary functionality of either a treatment or scenario that a collaborator or studio official could have read. It is all notes, the paraphrasing of scattered discussions, ideas to return to and develop.

Another difficulty: both projects, had they gone further, would have been gargantuan. The utopian character of their conceptual geneses—the optical utopia and the rhetorical one—set expectations for establishing new modes of filmic discourse and forms of storytelling that were nearly impossible to achieve. In both cases, there are inklings in the work notes that Eisenstein knew this, or that the realization gradually dawned on him. His "major concerns about 'Story' " in the *Glass House* project are matched by observations in the *Capital* notes about the dialectical essay structure, that "It is still 'somehow' very difficult to think in 'nonplot' imagery. But never mind, it will come!"[70] Both the projects were conceived to operate outside or beyond traditional story structure—and yet, both seemed to struggle to find momentum without one. The dilemma highlights an aspect of Eisenstein's creative process—a propensity to bite off more than might be possible to chew—not simply a tendency to imagine fundamentally *unfinishable* projects but also a methodological impulse to formal and theoretical totality, the burden of which proves, ultimately, to be the work's immediate undoing.

Both projects contain a tension between the ideal and the material. Each attempts to make an abstract cinematic language operate in a concrete context of material culture and history. In this sense, material is the necessary precondition for the expression of the abstract—or, as Eisenstein wrote in his notes of 9 February 1928, "Material *is not* determinative, it is just *expressive*, serving to materialize a given abstract thesis."[71] The abstracted third space required by *Capital*'s imperative for intellectual dialectic runs up against the concrete history of materials that it means to uncover; in *Glass House* the spatially dense "series of Marxist theses" are bound by the material dominant of omnipresent glass. As Eisenstein searches to reinvent and intensify his technique, cinema itself acts as the site of collision and interpenetration for the material world and the immaterial concepts emanating from and undergirding it; cinema becomes a realm of philosophic and aesthetic struggle between a materialistic tendency (in which reality is fundamentally anchored to material interactions) and an idealistic one (in which the infinite reality of the mental construct dominates).[72] With each tendency, Eisenstein seeks the perfect spectator-subject: one capable of holding the two in dynamic tension—or one, at least, who may

be induced by the materiality of the film image along the conceptual progression of dialectical thought.

Eisenstein's simultaneous work on *October*, *The General Line*, *Capital*, and *Glass House* was organized, as we know, around the intent to fully revolutionize the discursive potential and optical possibilities of cinematic language. And, indeed, in many ways, the imagined dedication of his *Capital* project can be taken as the metonymic miniature of his cinema-theoretical project of the late 1920s generally: that the substance of the film was to have been dedicated to the Communist International but that the form of it was to have been dedicated to James Joyce displays a crucial tension in the filmmaker's thinking. Marxism, or perhaps more properly, revolutionary ideology, is held separate, even if only momentarily, from the instance of formal radicalism in non-Soviet (Western, bourgeois) art. It is clear that Eisenstein, perhaps naïvely for the time, envisioned a compatibility between the radical content of the Marxist historical dialectic and the possibility for a purely rhetorical approach to film that it engendered and the formal innovations of Joyce's narrative technique, which were themselves, in the director's mind, oriented toward a similar "deanecdotalization" of plot material, though in an entirely apolitical mode.[73]

The reader of Eisenstein's notes is left, simply, to wonder about the compatibility of a discursive Marxian logic and its lyrical Joycean equivalent—bound together as they were by the possibilities they seemed to open for the director in his move away from anecdote, the illusion of story, and into pure concept.[74] But it is clear that such a division between content and form (or between the material and the method by which it is presented) is only provisional in Eisenstein's development of his "intellectual cinema," since, in its purest form (which *Capital* was meant to inaugurate), revolutionary thought was meant to serve as both the content and the form of cinema, and that indeed the two should ultimately be indivisible.

The argument that there needed to be more theoretical development before a project such as *Capital* could be properly tackled became one of Eisenstein's clearest reasons for delaying the film, but this is rhetorically dwarfed by the other reason he gave for permanently postponing its filming—the personal command of Stalin. In a spring 1929 meeting with Eisenstein, the general secretary told the director that there were "higher-priority assignments" that he ought to be working on.[75] Mikhail Bleiman remembers speaking with Eisenstein after the meeting with Stalin, and that Eisenstein relayed that the Soviet leader

had shouted "You've lost your mind!" upon hearing of his plan to film *Capital*.[76] Some, like Viacheslav Ivanov, read in this prohibition Stalin's imperative to fight against the formalist tendency in Russian art, and to defend Marx from any bourgeois individualist treatment.[77] This analysis is particularly convincing in the face of Grigori Alexandrov's own clearly idealized report of the 1929 conversation that Stalin held with Alexandrov and Eisenstein on their rough edit of *The General Line*. Alexandrov's recollection of this meeting does not include mention of the *Capital* project but does report on Stalin's feelings of Soviet filmmakers' attitude toward Marx. Alexandrov recalls, "Iosif Vissarionovich continued, 'In order to correctly sort out what you see [in the study of life itself], you must know Marxism. It seems to me that our artists still insufficiently understand the great strength of Marxism.' " Apparently, Stalin then spoke with some ardor about how little acquainted Soviet artists seemed to be with Marxism when they ought to be reading "his brilliant teachings very carefully." Alexandrov further recalled the conversation, " 'In order for your works to be saturated with Marxism,' said the leader, 'you yourselves should first of all truly know it, feel it, and love it.' "[78] Perhaps this was Eisenstein's biggest mistake in his approach to the film: in his desire to make Marx's theory speak for itself, he had neglected to acknowledge how hotly contested the interpretation of Marx had become in the politics that were being played all around him in the Soviet government. And as little interested as Stalin may have been in either pure theory or in the possibilities of intellectual cinema, what seems historically obvious is that the leader would have an extremely protective attitude toward the source of his ideological authority—and that this would have had as much to do with the form by which this material would be treated as it would have with the material content itself. At some point, Eisenstein surely recognized the danger of touching such a sacred text as *Capital*, even if only its method: by 1933, he had ceased mentioning any plans to produce it—and when composing lists of his unrealized projects he even neglected to include it.

Part II

Objective/Subjective

From one shifting ground to another: out of the revolutionary rigor of the Russian-Soviet film industry and into the whirlwind of the American studio system, and the seemingly limitless possibilities promised by the specter of big budgets. Eisenstein would pursue his next major projects in Hollywood, California. They would not be slow-growing, self-generated plans that gradually bloomed in occasional notes and ideas, but rather were studio properties, given to Eisenstein on assignment and developed efficiently and with absolute focus. The American projects are a markedly different set of imaginary films, devised as straightforward literary adaptations of recent novels whose deep concerns were the landscape, moral culture, and socioeconomic structures of the United States; unlike with Eisenstein's earlier unrealized projects of the late 1920s, with the two endeavors analyzed in this section, the director succeeded in composing full, practically viable screenplays oriented toward production. Eisenstein submitted these scripts, successively, to the studio but, of course, as we now expect this tragic story to go, both would remain unrealized.

The first was *Sutter's Gold*, the epic story of John Sutter, one of the central figures of the nineteenth-century California Gold Rush, adapted in this case from the French modernist Blaise Cendrars's novel *L'Or*.

The second was *An American Tragedy*, a taut adaptation of Theodore Dreiser's massive 1925 novel of murder and morality. Despite the seeming incommensurability of this new Hollywood context with the one Eisenstein had just left, in these works, the director was able to continue his intense examination of cinema's impact on the thought processes of the viewing subject. Whereas *Glass House* and *Capital* had been focused on the relationship between vision and thinking, *Sutter's Gold* and *An American Tragedy* can be seen as corollary experiments brimming with new technical possibilities in audio. With these projects, the director's thoughts had turned to the ways in which, in addition now to the cinema image, the additional stimulus of cinema sound and the function of cinematic hearing could further complicate the medium's interactivity with the functions of human thought.

Eisenstein's previous experiments in intellectual cinema, with their intended and real implementation of ever more refined montage techniques, had so far been limited almost entirely to expression on the visual plane. With the development of sound synchronization technology in the West, and its eventual preparation for use on a large scale toward the later 1920s (beginning, famously with 1927's *The Jazz Singer*), a lively debate had developed in film circles throughout Europe as well as in Russia over how this new domain of sensory manipulation could and ought to be employed. Functionally, synchronized sound recording and playback were still far from a reality in the Soviet film industry when Eisenstein was refining his thoughts on intellectual cinema. (The first full attempts at feature film production with sound synchronization in the Soviet Union would not take place until 1930, and then only on a limited scale.)[1] And yet, considering Eisenstein's goal of developing the formal capacities of his cinema to ever greater intellectual and emotional effect, it is telling that almost no *practical* imagining of sound technology should have found its way into the plans for his otherwise unrestrained cinema ideas of 1927–29. Even in the notes for *Glass House*, which Eisenstein conceived from the beginning as a possible American production, only one scant allusion to sound exists, in a margin, scrawled hastily and vertically, alongside note after note detailing the project's optical complexity.[2]

A Double-Edged Invention

Despite its absence from the *Glass House* and *Capital* plans, however, sound had most certainly been on Eisenstein's mind for some time.

As early as 1922, while still not yet a filmmaker, he had written of "the temptations of 'illusion' " that would accompany the expanded sensorium of the future audiovisual film.[3] He would later develop this claim in 1928, with memorable rhetorical precision, in his proclamation, "The Future of the Sound Film" (a document also signed by Grigori Alexandrov and Vsevolod Pudovkin), in which he promoted sound's role as a powerful new component in service of the higher law of montage—and not as a tool of accompaniment or illustration for the enhancement of an already dominant visual image. Eisenstein was vehemently against simple, illusionistic synchronization with the image and avidly for the "contrapuntal use of sound vis-à-vis the visual fragment of montage."[4] In the proclamation, Eisenstein considers sound "a double-edged invention" and predicts that the popular and negative tendency toward greater verisimilitude that talking pictures might offer would come to spell the "destruction of montage culture."[5] The fear, expressed by many in the avant-garde besides Eisenstein, was that the quintessentially *cinematic* techniques of montage-based meaning production would be displaced by the modes of verisimilitude inherited from the other arts (theater, most threateningly) that had preceded it.

Eisenstein had always asserted that the basic element of cinema was fragmentary and contingent—that no single image could stand as compositionally or semantically independent, and that meaning must always be created through juxtaposition, through movement, through the carefully orchestrated collision of film fragments. The simple *addition* (in Eisenstein's terminology) of sound to a visual montage composition would lead only to a cinematic inertness rather than an enhancement of the moving image's potential dynamism.[6] He substantiated his argument by referring to Japanese theater techniques, as in 1928's "An Unexpected Juncture," where he describes how sound film ought to operate: "Sound, movement, space, and voice *do not accompany* (or even parallel) one another but are treated as *equivalent elements*. . . . It is impossible to speak of 'accompaniments' in the Kabuki, just as we would not say that, when we walk or run, the left leg 'accompanies' the right or that they both 'accompany' the diaphragm."[7]

Thus, in these statements and elsewhere, Eisenstein's declared relationship to the use of sound in cinema is emphatically *not* for the fuller imitation of a convincing image of reality (i.e., synchronization) but for a fuller set of possibilities and potencies for montage, a newly complex audiovisual composition. To achieve this, Eisenstein considered it imperative that the aural montage units be deployed at an angle *oblique*

to the image. In his conception of sound cinema, nonsynchronization with the image is prioritized—as simple discord or as a more complex "orchestral counterpoint."[8] Imagine "words or sounds unrelated to the content of the frame, but related to the perception of it," a chorus of cows mooing played over a sleeping woman's face, for example, or the slowed-down sound of a circular saw accompanying images of impoverished peasants.[9] Eisenstein's goal with this as-yet theoretical approach to the audiovisual mechanism was intensely physical: in "The Fourth Dimension in Cinema," written in 1929, he argues that both auditory and visual montage units ought to operate beyond their separate technical domains in cinema as "totally physiological sensations."[10] Only thus, he argues, can filmmakers lay the groundwork that eventually "will give rise to the composition of the Soviet sound film."[11]

These thoughts on sound amount to an enthusiastic theoretical acceptance of sound's inevitable inclusion in the full technical toolkit of montage. The implications for an even more sophisticated approach to the cinema of theses and slogans that Eisenstein had been elaborating in the *Glass House* and *Capital* projects are apparent: if it was the role of the intellectual cinema to lead viewers to think in concepts by means of the dialectic, then the sensory and psychological means by which that concept-based cinema might be accomplished could grow ever more precise, the cognitive path toward correct ideology more abundantly governable, with the introduction of the sound montage element.

At this stage, the closest Eisenstein would come to practical work with sound followed his announcement, in January 1928, that, having completed *October*, he planned to reedit *The General Line* and prepare a soundtrack to be played in time with the film's screenings.[12] A year passed before he was able to pursue his intention concretely. In August 1929, the director prepared a series of detailed notes for a sound collage for the film that included some important clarifications about how a variety of sonic units (speech, music, sound effects, something he refers to as "cartoon sound") might be used to produce the contrapuntal audio-video montage that he had proposed in his earlier essays.[13] This postfactum sound script is both ambitious and radical in its proposals for audio sources: it calls for a wide range of both studio- and field-recorded sounds and voices, multiple types of performed music (from folk to orchestral), and sound manipulations ("deformation" and "distortion"). But its grandest designs are in the montage of that sound: various leitmotifs are meant to replace one another at specific junctures; sounds fade, crescendo, diminuendo, and merge throughout

in a complex fabric of recurrence and collision. One instruction reads "Harvest—the whole *gamma* of sound effects, from galloping horses to motorcycles and ending with the rockets of the Oppel [*sic*] automobile. Perhaps in combination with brass instruments."[14] Such outsized formal objectives must have made the realization of the soundtrack impossible with the still-nascent sound-recording technologies at the filmmaker's disposal (a condition Eisenstein had alluded to explicitly in the 1928 statement on sound). And so, it is perhaps unsurprising that nothing came of the intention. Funding that Eisenstein had hoped for fell through and, upon viewing the film's rough cut, Stalin ordered that the film itself be revised and additional footage for it shot.[15]

In Eisenstein's recollection of the essence of his and Grigori Alexandrov's spring 1929 meeting with Stalin, one of the "higher-priority assignments" that Stalin intended for the filmmakers to complete, apart from shooting new footage for the film, was an investigation and assimilation of the full battery of sound film techniques. Eisenstein alludes to this directive retrospectively in his 1932 essay on Lenin, and Alexandrov describes this detail of the conversation with the Leader more explicitly in his memoir: Stalin said that it would be vital that they should go to America and "study sound cinema in detail," since, "when our heroes obtain speech, the cinematic work's power to influence will become enormous."[16] Nowhere in either account of the conversation with Stalin is there any suggestion that he had thought it wise for Eisenstein to attempt to *make* films abroad—for Eisenstein, however, as ever, the most stimulating and instructive way to develop new technique was to learn in the process of applying an intricately organized formal and theoretical program.

After leaving the Soviet Union for Western Europe with Alexandrov and camera operator Eduard Tisse in the spring of 1930, Eisenstein had a first opportunity to experiment with sound in a short film he codirected with Alexandrov in France, *Romance sentimentale*. A twenty-minute musical montage experiment funded by pearl trader Leonard Rosenthal (on the condition that his girlfriend Mara Gris would play the main role), the film featured the halting implementation of some of the ideas on asynchronous sound from Eisenstein's earlier essays but is clearly an endeavor of both mixed impulses and mixed results. In one personal letter of the time, he writes, "*Romance sentimentale* has to some extent successfully realized our thoughts and experiments in the 'play with sound.' . . . [It has] produced remarkable results," while in another communication he says that, despite its "*very valuable* montage

experiments . . . there is not a lot of me in [the film] (to say the least)."[17] Indeed, thematically and conceptually, the project is couched in a surprisingly regressive romanticism—essentially a bourgeois ballad of lost love and languor—that could only have been alienating to Eisenstein's avant-garde European colleagues.[18] As a sound collage, however, it does traverse, remarkably, a broad range of audio effects that the authors had earlier imagined: jagged audiovisual montages with abstracted imagery confronting cacophonous studio sounds and music, sounds that veer in and out of the diegetic space the film suggests, surprisingly expressionistic deformations of the visual and audio planes (the heroine's dress changes colors, her piano changes from black to white, both player and piano are placed in double exposure with clouds, sky, and flying swans while the soundtrack suddenly heaves under the weight of sonic crackles, whistles, and cymbals). Despite the experiment's obvious aesthetic compromises, in its attempt at using perpendicular, alogical audiovisual combinations to reveal the inner experience of its heroine, the film should be seen as an important step toward the more sophisticated sound designs of Eisenstein's American projects.

Heroes Obtain Speech

On the premise that sound cinema must operate according to a principle of nonsynchronicity, as it had both on paper and in practice in his earliest (perhaps underdeveloped) experiments, Eisenstein the theoretician had to consider a larger dilemma: how can this formal insistence on audiovisual disjuncture square with Stalin's vision of the sound film, which itself centers on synchronization, on the film hero beginning to speak? The resolution of this problem was a delicate one for Eisenstein, and it is the fulcrum on which his primary breakthrough with sound would depend. Conceptually, the question becomes one of location: where should this endowment of speech take place—in an exterior form of speech or an interior one?

An offhand entry in his diary of August 1929 indicates the way Eisenstein had begun to think of the role of sound, when he writes, "Until now we have been in cinema's period of 'manual labor.' Now (and this is striking with the introduction of sound) we are transitioning to a concentration of cinema on the part of the body represented by the head, to a direct connection with the brain."[19] With his continuing interest in the connection between cinema and cognition, it is no surprise that Eisenstein understood sound cinema's true potential to be intricately

linked with the movements of the human mind. Other Soviet cinema thinkers, such as Boris Eikhenbaum in his 1927 essay "Problems of Cinema Stylistics," had insisted on this as well. There, Eikhenbaum links to cinema the idea of *internal speech* (or *inner speech*)—a concept proposed a few years earlier by the developmental psychologist Lev Vygotsky—and specifically, he connects it to montage: "In order to study the laws of cinema (and in the first place, of montage) it is very important to realize that the perception and understanding of films is inseparably linked to the formation of internal speech, which chains the individual shots together."[20] For Eikhenbaum, the concept was crucial for the process of reception in cinema—that cinema itself was a respite from the tyranny of the verbal in contemporary society, that in film, objects could be perceived purely, could be apprehended in a context independent from "the culture of the word." In his authoritative work, *Thought and Speech*, Vygotsky writes that inner speech is a phenomenon of subjective human cognition, qualitatively different and autonomous from external (oral) speech. Vygotsky describes this process as a kind of speech or "thought connected with words" but observes that, "while in external speech thought is embodied in words . . . inner speech is to a large extent thinking in pure meanings. It is a dynamic, shifting, unstable thing, fluttering between word and thought."[21]

Whereas Vygotsky had developed the model of inner speech as an inherent feature of human cognition, Eikhenbaum does so specifically in regard to the cinema—both in its production and its reception. In his view, "one of the principal concerns of the director" was the creation of a cinema text that would "translate into the language of [the viewer's] own inner speech."[22] Eikhenbaum's thoughts had been developed in the context of the silent cinema, which he viewed as being fundamentally in "opposition to the culture of the word," placing viewers "in completely new conditions of perception" that were primed to correlate with the production of inner speech.[23] With the looming possibility of a fully sound-synchronized cinema, Eikhenbaum and others feared that the achievements of silent film montage would be drowned out by an abundance of external speech that would emanate from the characters on screen—in other words, that the viewer's potentially powerful subjective experience of thought would be overwhelmed by the characters *talking* in a realistic way from the screen.[24]

For Eisenstein, like Eikhenbaum, the problem is one of synchronization—synced dialogue is an instance of sound's employment for the kind of hyperreal verisimilitude against which Eisenstein had written

in his 1928 statement on sound. Eisenstein too was very familiar with Vygotsky's work and had even worked briefly with the psychologist to study ways in which cinema might affect certain cognitive processes in viewers as part of the director's own research into intellectual film. Indeed, the concept of inner speech had begun to settle into the director's set of working conceptions.[25] Eisenstein's approach to the idea, especially as it applied to the imminent sound film, was to carefully determine how sound might be employed practically, in a montage context, to *further* activate the viewer's process of inner speech, rather than stultify it under layers of onscreen verbosity and illusory multisensory experience.

Evidently, Eisenstein's solution to this task was to use sound to explore the process itself, to explore possibilities of using sound as an illustrative tool of the inner cognitive movements of the subjects in his films. For example, Léon Moussinac recounts Eisenstein's early 1930 meeting with James Joyce in Paris: "In Joyce, Eisenstein found a man to whom his aims and methods were intelligible. They talked of the future development of their mutual preoccupation—the 'internal monologue'—how the process of the mind could be made visible and comprehensible through the film medium."[26] A variation on the intention with *Capital* to depict the movement of human thought, Eisenstein's new film ideas soon coalesced around the possibilities for the aural expression of the human mind's inner workings. Although Vygotsky's psycholinguistic concept of inner speech and Joyce's literary device of the interior monologue ("the rapid and vigorous presentation of the flow of those secret and autonomous thoughts which seem to shape themselves beyond the pale of consciousness") may not have been fully commensurable, Eisenstein saw in their commonalities a way of heightening the expressive and rhetorical possibilities of the film medium—reconciling the two by emphasizing their common basis in the subjective movements of internal cognition.[27] And it seems that his conversation with Joyce encouraged his work toward this goal. As we will see in this section, Eisenstein's first full-scale attempts at sound cinema were primarily occupied with the use of inner speech not only as a constructive model to direct audience thought (again, a kind of parallel to what he had done silently in his *Capital* project) but also, more radically, as a *demonstration* of the process as a process—to portray the subjective experience of fictional characters, to create an inner speech that might occur in the interiority of his film's heroes. In a sense, this would be going one step further than Joyce: not simply

reproducing the processes onscreen but developing a new audiovisual language for such thought.[28]

In the 1932 essay "Help Yourself!," Eisenstein recalled his early thoughts on the application of inner speech to cinema: "How fascinating to listen to your own train of thought, especially in its affect when you catch yourself wondering: what do I see? how? what do I hear?! How do you talk 'within yourself' as distinct from 'outside yourself'? What is the syntax of inner language, as distinct from external? What quiverings of inner words accompany the corresponding visual image?"[29]

Eisenstein's sum realization in these theoretical investigations is that "the raw material of sound film is not *dialogue*. *The true material of the sound film is, of course, the monologue*." Dialogue is the domain of external speech, inevitably oriented toward realism, or worse, to theatricality; monologue operates as a discrete unit of cognitive movement, analogous to inner speech, analogous too to the pure cinematic theses that had been so vital to both *Glass House* and *Capital*. The relationship between Eisenstein's previous method in these films and its new audiovisual expression was clear and direct: he would later qualify the technique of interior monologue as "a minor sequel" to the intellectual cinema. It is important to note that interior monologue, in Eisenstein's formulation, was seen as yet another unit of montage that had to be deployed, it is assumed, *always*, against other such units.[30] As we will see in our analysis of the American films that follows, Eisenstein's development of the technique would be predicated most often on a collision of contrasting audio and visual signals. An audio track of inner speech that runs in conflict with the visual unit, that itself acts as the signature of a purely diegetic *nonsubjective* reality, is the most common formula—witness, for example, a turbulent interiority contrasting a stoic visual exteriority. Taken together, these articulated formal theories of the use of sound, with monologue and inner speech as their organizing principles, would become the motivating factors in the composition of the two film projects that Eisenstein would propose in Hollywood.

Listening into America

In their 1928 statement on the future sound film, Eisenstein and Alexandrov had concluded with the assertion that "the *contrapuntal method* of structuring a sound film not only does not weaken *the international nature of cinema*, but gives to its meaning unparalleled strength and cultural heights."[31] Although at the time that they wrote this, the authors

had never seen an actual sound film, let alone attempted to make one, they soon found themselves in a position—in Hollywood, in 1930—to test their hypothesis by composing a sound film in a language not native to them, for a new national audience, while, we must assume, making sure that the film would also play well at home, eventually, in the Soviet Union.

As we saw previously, Eisenstein had hoped that his *Glass House* project would be capable of providing a "view into America," but he had failed to find an appropriate story to make the intensely visual project work. Now, with his recent and consuming focus on sound film theory and practice, along with the demand of the American market for sound pictures, he needed to make a film that would not only *see* into America but *listen* into it as well.

The plan, then, to make a sound film was aided by the opportunity that Paramount provided to adapt existing literary properties for the cinema. Such an approach immediately overcame the difficulties with narrative and character with which his previous two projects had struggled—the narrative and the characters were there, simply waiting to be adapted. This acquiescence to both narrative and character can be read as a pragmatic shift—one that displaces the ideological heft of the work from its radical form (this would be true adaptation of narrative and not, as in *Capital*, of a method) to its tendentious content (the story, such that it was, becomes *more clearly structured* and simultaneously *more easily readable* with strong sociopolitical implications). And sound here plays the vital, didactic role: as Eisenstein proclaims at the end of the *Sutter's Gold* screenplay, "legends are forgotten but songs—songs remain."[32] The possible cinema sound units (songs among them) could aspire to an aural power that might persist in the mind, like a recurrent motif, long after the film itself had faded away.

Both new film projects would be set in quintessentially American narrative landscapes—the California Gold Rush, urban midwestern industrialism—and would present iterations of a story arc in which the hero rises and falls, rags to riches to rags, in pursuit of the capitalist American dream. The accumulation of private wealth, cultural status, and individual liberty in these stories motivate upward plot development until the social mechanisms that had produced the allure of such capital turn against the hero and crush that dream. Eisenstein himself would later isolate this thematic trend in his "Hollywood 'cycle'" as "a tragedy of the monumental personality. The monumental personality in conflict with society."[33]

The screenplays that Eisenstein produced for these films are the most complete and whole texts of all of Eisenstein's unrealized projects. They exist in such full form in part because they were written for a studio system with a much more articulated set of production requirements, and in part because they were made in collaboration with an anglophone cowriter, Ivor Montagu, a British citizen, cofounder of the London Film Society and later a Soviet operative in Great Britain. Montagu kept his copies of the script documents, published them in the West, saw to their eventual archival preservation, and described the collaboration in some very valuable memoirs.[34] Both scripts can be read as traditional adaptations of more or less important recent literature (both novels were published in English in 1925–26), selected to suit the requirements of a prestigious Hollywood contract; yet Eisenstein meant to pursue his cinema-theoretical interests and produce something wholly new from the literary original. The goal was not merely to adapt the story successfully but, further, to harness the existing text for a precisely orchestrated audiovisual cinema text with ideological and tragic potency.

Chapter 4

Sutter's Gold

> When you think to yourself, you don't use words, you have another system. Some words you name, some you think in images, and from that is formed the arrangement of speech which, if you were to say it out loud, would be incoherent.
>
> —Sergei Eisenstein, lecture at the State Institute of Cinematography, November 1934

Although Blaise Cendrars's novel *L'Or* was translated into Russian and published in 1926 as *Zoloto*, there is no indication that Eisenstein had made any serious acquaintance with the work of Cendrars before meeting the writer during his 1930 stay in Paris.[1] Cendrars was an imposing figure of the Parisian left avant-garde: a Swiss-born poet and novelist with a pseudonym chosen to conjure the inferno, he was a denizen of Montparnasse in the 1920s, a friend of Apollinaire, Modigliani, and Henry Miller. He drove an Alfa Romeo detailed by Georges Braque, had what Hemingway diagnosed as a "broken boxer's face," and had lost his right arm fighting in World War I. In short, Cendrars was the type of character who would certainly have fascinated Eisenstein. In Paris, on a spring morning of 1930, Cendrars and Eisenstein breakfasted together. They may have discussed *L'Or* and its fictionalized account of John Sutter's nineteenth-century journey from provincial Switzerland to the heart of the California Gold Rush; perhaps they even debated its suitability for cinema adaptation.[2]

Eisenstein, it seems, had already contemplated the Gold Rush as a possible film setting: one of the treatments that he had been offered late the previous year, shortly after his arrival in Berlin, was a two-page German-language treatment titled *Dämon Gold*, based on Stefan Zweig's telling of the John Sutter story in his 1927 miniature *The Discovery of*

El Dorado.[3] With the possibilities of a film on gold fever percolating in his mind (and this would have been only one of many possible films thus percolating), Eisenstein was called to an urgent meeting on 21 April with Paramount Pictures' Head of Production, Jesse Lasky, who happened to be visiting Paris. Eisenstein was on the Riviera at the time, with film critic Léon Moussinac and his wife, but he quickly took a train to the French capital for the meeting. En route, he read and annotated Cendrars's novel (with "penciled commentary like the lashes of a whip").[4] Eisenstein knew that this urgent meeting portended a potential contract with the studio—and he had heard that Lasky wanted a literary adaptation above all else. Many potential literary properties were discussed in the meeting, including *L'Or*, but in the end, on 30 April 1930, Eisenstein was given contractual freedom to develop a project from his own choice of subject matter.[5]

He took Cendrars's novel with him when he left Paris for America—"one serious piece of baggage," according to Ivor Montagu, now traveling in Eisenstein's entourage, a "marked copy . . . ready to hand."[6] By July 1930, having definitively given up hope of producing *Glass House* in America, *L'Or* became Eisenstein's focus, and he set about adapting the novel into a script for Paramount. From its pages, it is immediately clear that *L'Or* is well suited to a second life in cinema; no doubt this eased Eisenstein's selection of it as source material. The prose is compact, sensorily focused, and episodic. The descriptive paragraphs are short, and the dialogue is terse—the arrangement of scenes even has a hint of cinematic montage. This quality of the writing, which suggests a deep familiarity with Hollywood westerns, has been described as an attempt to "seize the world of travel and marvelous adventure with the speed, and at the unusual angles, of a cinema camera."[7]

This type of intermedial metaphor is by no means groundless, since in the late 1910s Cendrars had come to envision a future for himself as a film director.[8] But more meaningful is the undeniably inherent and intentional cinematic quality of Cendrars's literary style, on full display in *L'Or*, something that helps illuminate what Eisenstein may have seen as the novel's potential for easy adaptation. What is cinematic in Cendrars's prose exists almost entirely on the visual plane: individual scenes are organized around units of action, this action is viewed as if from a camera's distance, and many scenes feature anchoring objects in close-up (a brass button, a pickax, parts for a steam mill).[9] Moreover, very little interiority is given to any of the characters, information is dispensed almost entirely by a businesslike omnipotent narrator, and

when occasional dialogue or song interrupts these external descriptions, it is in isolated chunks, as though in a title card. In other words, the remarkable filmic quality of the novel is determined by the almost exclusively visual styling of its language. If Cendrars's *L'Or* emerges from a cinematic imagination, it is decidedly one of the *silent* cinema.

Exceptionally Musical Prose

The question becomes, What was it in *L'Or* that Eisenstein wanted to cinematize? Clearly the story was attractive: a potentially effective vehicle for Marxist observations on the sickness of rampant capital and accumulation, and set, moreover, at the genesis of the state of California's vast riches. The fact that this same excess of capital underwrote much of the same wealth that would have, had it worked out, contributed to the funding of the film itself was an irony undoubtedly attractive to Eisenstein.

As a matter of fact, he and his collaborators—Alexandrov, Montagu, and cameraman Eduard Tisse—had been generously set up by Paramount to live and work in the secluded luxury of a mansion house in the Coldwater Canyon area of Beverly Hills, where they performed the

Figure 7.1. Grigori Alexandrov working with Eisenstein in their shared Beverly Hills accommodations. Associated Press. Used with permission.

early research and organization that would sustain the writing of the script. The materials they produced then—a précis of the novel, a short treatment, lists of references and locations (including the redressing of producer Jesse Lasky's own ranch in Simi Hills as the famous Sutter's Mill and Hock Farm)—were organized with the primary goal of arranging the novel's historical narrative into an understandable set of visual materials and objects for filming.[10] The most detailed of these documents, the treatment, is dappled with a few intimations of the director's intention to develop a sophisticated sound palette (a sonic cross-fade, Sutter's name echoing mysteriously in the natural world, a climactic symphony) but, apart from that, the early materials are formatted strictly as a series of visual scenes and shot descriptions.[11] This is very different from the eventual final version of the script, which distinguishes itself from Cendrars's novel by the enormous care and ingenuity it applies to the soundtrack with its orchestration and manipulation of detailed diegetic sounds, songs, vocal expressions, extradiegetic music, and narrative voice.[12] How did such a shift in sensory focus occur with Eisenstein in the relatively brief composition process?

Available documents show that immediately after Eisenstein and his collaborators had done this initial work on the novel, he, Alexandrov, and Montagu traveled north, to San Francisco and Sacramento, to engage in a few days of historical and ethnographic research. The time spent on location at the historic site of Sutter's ranch in Coloma—about one hundred miles east of San Francisco—had the intended effect of helping the filmmakers envision a screenplay that more materially corresponded to both the reality and the legend of the 1848 discovery of gold on Sutter's estate. The trio strolled through San Francisco's old quarters, visited ghost towns and provincial museums, inspected creeks where gold had been panned, heard stories from ancient residents who claimed that they "as children, had sat on Stutter's lap."[13] The drawings that Eisenstein produced during this trip and afterward—the layout of Sutter's Fort, the view of Monterey Bay, houses built atop moored ships in the San Francisco harbor, and so on—can attest to the specificity with which this journey endowed their vision.[14]

But, according to Eisenstein, the most significant development to occur during the brief journey, one that would have a profound effect on the writing of the full screenplay, was a revelation that came to him, like a shaft of light, on the use of audio in cinema. He recalls this vision in a section of his memoirs that addresses musical counterpoint. Describing first the tall pine trees used in the set design for his 1940

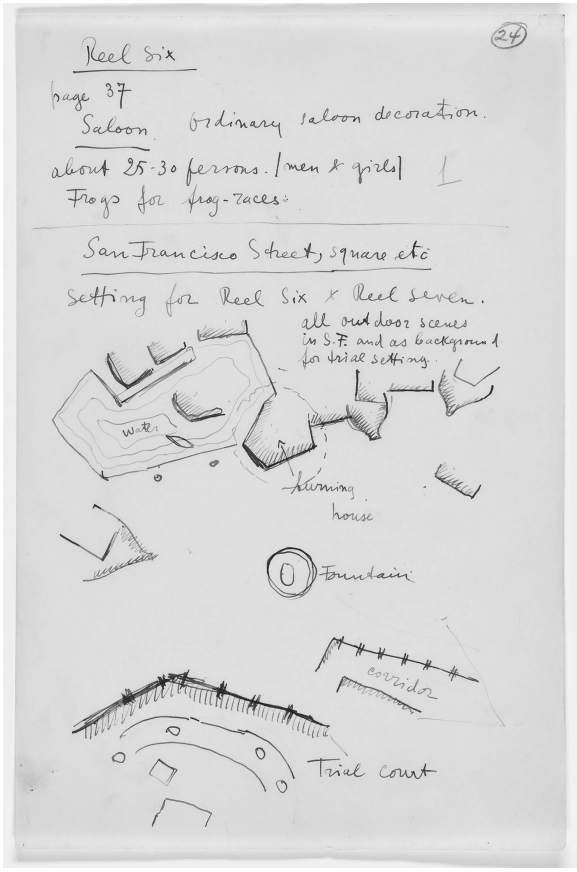


Figure 7.2. A sketch for a *Sutter's Gold* San Francisco location. Eisenstein, [A.17]. MoMA Archives, NY. Used with permission.

Moscow production of Wagner's *Die Walküre*, he makes an association: "I [had come] to know the structure of leitmotif and counterpoint among the bases of even greater trees—the famous redwoods around San Francisco. I rested for a week in their cool shade, far from the heat and commotion of Hollywood; I gnawed the sweet fruits of knowledge and drank the subtle poison of Joyce's *Ulysses*."[15]

The recipient of enlightenment beneath a tree—framing himself like a Newton or Buddha—Eisenstein reveals that his most vital reading material, the "remarkable piece of literature" that he carried on this trip to Northern California was not Cendrars's novel, but rather Joyce's.[16] He continues: "Tiny squirrels hopped about gnawing nuts at the feet of these gigantic trees. The crowns of the giant redwoods vanished in the

blue sky. And the multiple passages of regular, intricate constructions from the chapters of this novel's exceptionally musical prose whispered the secrets of these melodic structures in my ear one by one."[17]

The next several pages of this reminiscence are full of observations about Joyce's linguistic compositions in the "Sirens" episode of *Ulysses*, which are aided by passages from Stuart Gilbert's 1930 Study of the novel (a copy of which he seems also to have taken with him on the trip). Eisenstein made note of how certain of Joyce's linguistic devices corresponded, for example, to musical fermata or fugue structures and remarked on the author's delicate introduction of recurring motifs. In Joyce, Eisenstein recognized the model of symphonic form employed as an expressive device in literature and saw that it retained its musical capacity for being heard "vertically as well as horizontally."[18] Eisenstein relays the most forceful and final impression of these realizations in the redwoods by quoting a paragraph from Gilbert's analysis of the novel, in which he claims that in Joyce's fusion of music and language, "the meaning does not lose but is, rather, intensified by the combination of the two arts; sense is not sacrificed to sound but the two are . . . harmonised."[19] Eisenstein's fundamental realizations about "sense and sound" suggest a crystallization of the notions he had begun proposing two years earlier in his essays on the audiovisual film. Now, with the compositional example of Joyce's *Ulysses* in front of him, the text of Cendrars's novel firmly in his mind, and the restless auditory environment of his developing film's Northern California setting in his ears, the director was able to conclusively understand the "obvious tangibility" of the soundtrack and its montage potential. With this new knowledge, and a set of newly gathered research references, he returned with his assistants to Hollywood and set to writing out the full script—now dense with sound cues and intricate, barbed audiovisual orchestrations—and produced a full draft of fifty-six pages for the studio in just three days of writing.[20]

The factory-style composition process for the screenplay went something like this: plot material was divided into seven equally weighted reels (each calculated to occupy ten to twelve minutes of screentime), and work on each reel proceeded simultaneously with the others. Eisenstein would dictate the broad action and audiovisual structure of a reel to assistant director Alexandrov, who would then write it out in Russian. After this, studio translators stepped in to make an immediate and literal English-language translation. Then, having discussed and augmented this translation together with

Eisenstein, Montagu would handwrite an adapted English version of the text, making necessary stylistic improvements with the sheen of a sophisticated native English speaker, after which his wife Eileen (Hell) would type it up and pass it to the Paramount copyists. The arrangement allowed work on all reels to develop simultaneously: Reel six being written out longhand while reel five was being translated, reel four being polished in English while reel three was being typed up, and so on. This complex and multistage process allowed for the script to be composed "straight off in a single operation lasting many hours, without sleep or rest."[21]

The fully articulated script of *Sutter's Gold*—the title is taken from the novel's 1926 English-language translation—is composed in short paragraphs, most just one or two lines on the page, each paragraph presenting a new sound or image to be recorded, shot, perceived. The script has the initial appearance of an epic poem or historical romance—the terse lines occasionally taking on the look of a quasi-stanzaic form, its seven reels neatly dividing the narrative into seven chapters or cantos. The first follows a young Sutter from Switzerland to New York City; the second imagines his adventures crossing the expanse of the American continent; the third his arrival in California and his establishment of the colony New Helvetia near Sacramento; the fourth centers on the discovery of gold on Sutter's land and the subsequent deluge of prospectors and speculators; the fifth follows Sutter's abandoned wife Anna as she travels west to find her husband; in the sixth we see Sutter's desperate legal battles against those who have overrun his lands in their gold fever; the seventh and final reel details the fiery ruination of Sutter's lands and his tragic death on the steps of the state capitol.

A Song of California

The fruits of Eisenstein's audiovisual inquiry become immediately apparent as sense and sound are enjoined in an elaborate interplay from the very first pages. Reel one initiates this sound design potently:

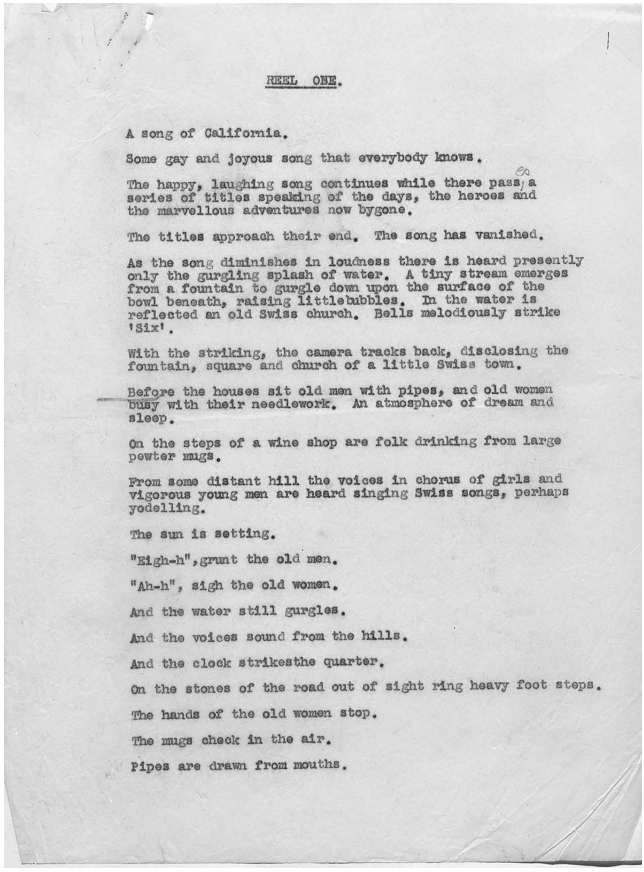
> A song of California.
>
> Some gay and joyous song that everybody knows.
>
> The happy, laughing song continues while a series of titles passes speaking of the days, the heroes, and the marvelous adventures now bygone.

> The titles approach their end. The song has vanished.
>
> As the song diminishes in loudness presently only the gurgling splash of water is heard. A tiny stream emerges from a fountain to gurgle down on the surface of the bowl beneath, raising little bubbles. The water reflects an old Swiss church. Bells melodiously strike "six."[22]

These initial lines of screenwriting are impressionistic, sensual, animating. "A song of California" reads both as a chapter heading and a sound cue. The titles "speak"; the song "laughs" and "vanishes"; water "gurgles," "bubbles," and "reflects."

But even more notable is this detail: for his first sound film screenplay, the striking first words that Eisenstein writes are "A song." To begin what was meant to be his Hollywood debut with a song (of California, no less) is to announce his readiness to work with sound and American film technology and, of course, as the script bears out, to harness it toward his own filmmaking practices. The song itself—which the text suggests is meant to ring out in the darkened theater before any image appears to illuminate the screen—would have functioned no less emphatically. Only once this "happy, laughing song continues," like a Greek chorus, casting its spell, would the screen light up with a series of titles. The viewer is meant to continue listening to the song of California while reading the onscreen text, material that further develops a myth of California: its history, heroes, and their adventures. This complicated simultaneity of narrative codes—an epic song on the soundtrack and its parallel unfurling in a somewhat different (visual) historical text onscreen—immediately establishes the place of audiovisual counterpoint in the newly expanded Eisenstein sensorium.

The song begins to grow faint and the titles fade to black as a new sound—not a song, but a natural acoustic effect—rises on the soundtrack, this one seemingly with diegetic potential: the gurgling of water, against a screen that is once again black. Until now there has been a distinct disjunction between sound and image, each continuing to work on its own trajectory. But this now changes: an image of water splashing downward from a fountain and into a basin marks the film's first instance of synchronization, the gurgle now coordinated with a corresponding visual flow. The sudden harmony and the verisimilitude that it suggests is then complicated by the first discernible



REEL ONE.

A song of California.

Some gay and joyous song that everybody knows.

The happy, laughing song continues while there pass a series of titles speaking of the days, the heroes and the marvellous adventures now bygone.

The titles approach their end. The song has vanished.

As the song diminishes in loudness there is heard presently only the gurgling splash of water. A tiny stream emerges from a fountain to gurgle down upon the surface of the bowl beneath, raising littlebubbles. In the water is reflected an old Swiss church. Bells melodiously strike 'Six'.

With the striking, the camera tracks back, disclosing the fountain, square and church of a little Swiss town.

Before the houses sit old men with pipes, and old women busy with their needlework. An atmosphere of dream and sleep.

On the steps of a wine shop are folk drinking from large pewter mugs.

From some distant hill the voices in chorus of girls and vigorous young men are heard singing Swiss songs, perhaps yodelling.

The sun is setting.

"Righ-h", grunt the old men.

"Ah-h", sigh the old women.

And the water still gurgles.

And the voices sound from the hills.

And the clock strikesthe quarter.

On the stones of the road out of sight ring heavy foot steps.

The hands of the old women stop.

The mugs check in the air.

Pipes are drawn from mouths.

Figure 7.3. The first page of the *Sutter's Gold* screenplay. RGALI 1923-2-168, 1. Used with permission.

image of the film's world: reflected in the fountain's water is a church, its optical contingency highlighted by the bubbles on the surface. Finally, a melodious peal of bells that the viewer can surmise belongs to what might be the mirror-reverse belfries in the church's rippling image. With that, the intricate sequence of sensory ontologies subsides as "the camera tracks back, disclosing the fountain square and church of a little Swiss town."[23]

The logic here, which blatantly goes against the expectation only just established, is that we are not in California at all, but in a Switzerland now coming sharply into view: the old men of the village smoke their pipes and old women work at their embroidery, pewter mugs of wine

are drained by village folk, everyone sits dreamily in front of old houses and shops. And then again, the audio world makes a dramatic incursion into the visual:

> From some distant hill the voices in chorus of girls and vigorous young men are heard singing Swiss songs, perhaps yodeling.
> The sun is setting.
> "Eigh-h," grunt the old men.
> "Ah-h," sigh the old women.
> And the water still gurgles.
> And the voices sound from the hills.
> And the clock strikes the quarter.
> On the stones of the road out of sight ring heavy footsteps.[24]

A new song is heard, now a song of Switzerland, and unlike the song of California, it does not emanate omnipotently from narrative blackness directly to the viewer, but it is one that the screen's figures hear and to which they respond. The grunts and sighs of the elderly townspeople operate as a low-toned rhythm to accentuate the light, distant singing of the youth—under all of this, the continuously gurgling water provides sonic texture, and the quarter-hour striking of the clock, percussion. This is an intensely auditory composition, a collage of sounds that ranges into spaces far beyond the filmed images—we have no bodily descriptions of the girls and young men, we only hear their distant voices. This swelling composition suddenly breaks off in a moment of explicit audio foregrounding as heavy footsteps resound "out of sight."

In the early *Sutter's Gold* treatments, the opening scene had been developed with no apparent thought toward sound—only in this full version does the weight of the carefully considered soundtrack appear. The opening scene thus changes from "Switzerland—a tiny village. Several gathered in the square. A dark figure of a stranger" to an intricate collage of the extradiegetic song of California, the gurgling well, the hillside yodeling, the sighing of elderly village people, the invisible boots ringing out on unseen cobbles, and the stillness that extinguishes the murmur of the town square.[25] In his screenplay, Eisenstein then takes pains to introduce his central character through an intense sonic close-up whose photographed counterpart is intentionally obscure: "a figure approaches," black against the sun, "the folk screw up their eyes" trying to make out his face. But he is just a "silhouette."[26] Of course, this is John Sutter, whom we will come to know as a Swiss outlaw and adventurer, colonizer of Sacramento, owner of the legendary Sutter's Mill,

and the more or less unhappy father of the California Gold Rush. But the script suggests that the camera not show Sutter's face until after he has walked into the center of the square and asked a local boy which building houses the police prefecture, until he has gone inside, come out again, slammed the door, and shattered its glass with an emphatic crunch. The sound of all these actions remains in the foreground.

Sutter's violent intrusion into the placid town is a sequence of sharp noises that institute silence all around: when he stops harshly to spit in the fountain, the villagers can only mutely stare back, while a dog barks somewhere offscreen. Sutter turns and strides away "with the same firm step with which he came," his boots presumably ringing out on the stones as his silhouette fades and "the sounds die away." Only the fountain's continued gurgle remains. The scene then ends on two rhythmic expressions: one vocal, the other mechanical.

An inquisitive old man comes to the fountain and stares at the floating spittle:

"Mm-m-m-m."

The notes of the clock ring, out striking the second quarter—

"Ting
Tang
Tang
Tang"[27]

The entire first scene of the film is accomplished with hardly a word of dialogue spoken, though the totality of an ambient sound world has been created and, with it, the characteristic sounds of various characters and objects. Even the graphic presentation of text on the page functions to show something of the sonic quality of the envisioned film, the descending "Ting, Tang, Tang, Tang" sequence here like a bit of modernist poetry, laying itself out as verses in staircase format. The scene's sonic virtuosity had arisen completely from the imagination of the filmmaker—Cendrars's original, apart from a brief inclusion of lines from an alpine song, had built the scene almost entirely on the visual.[28]

Before the final page of the script, we will hear the same "Song of California," which plays in many instances throughout, with variations and tonal shifts, and recognize that it is meant as a theme for Sutter; the heroes and adventures described in the song become a pendant to his onscreen journey toward and across the American landscape and

into its mythology. As a musical thread woven throughout the script, the song underscores Sutter's adventures and his translation from historical figure to legend. For example, the initial theme, with the tales sung of Californian adventure over the initial title sequence, is transposed in the second reel into an impish cabaret number, by turns erotic and passionate, sung by Mary, an early love interest. The adventures imagined in this variation of the song ("go out and seek new paths, fortune will smile"; "forward, forward, fortune waits you") now spur the hero across the Great Plains toward the sea. In the film's fourth reel, the song becomes one specifically of the Gold Rush, sung in chorus by the teeming flow of forty-niners.[29] Later still, in the seventh reel, the song becomes a triumphal though ironic refrain for a much older, disenfranchised Sutter when he is made a general at the fifth anniversary gala of San Francisco—the city's inhabitants singing and cheering for "the founder, the pioneer, the patriarch." There, the "people sing the song of Sutter/The joyous swelling song of California" as our paranoid hero rides horseback through the street, suspicious of the acquisitive crowds that will soon spoil his land and livelihood. As the jubilation grows into a bacchanalia, the sense of dread rising, the scene ends with the song of California "on every man's lips."[30] In the subsequent shots, Sutter sings an agitated version of the song to himself—resurrecting Mary's circus balladeering of it—as he spurs his horse to the city to pursue his legal battle.[31] In the film's final moments, as a grim culmination, Sutter, a solitary, broken man waiting outside the courthouse to have his complaint heard, dies on the "wide immensity of the flight of steps"; his corpse is swallowed by the building's shadow, advancing "like a black curtain."[32] The shadow acts as a visual refrain of the shadow that had obscured the hero's face in the first scene, and the entire tableau, inevitably, is an allusion to Eisenstein's iconic previous treatment of tragedy on the Odessa steps in *Battleship Potemkin*.[33] The forward march of state-sponsored death remains implacable.

This final moment, in which the soundtrack would again have had the most prominent direction over the narrative, arrives as Sutter's body lies in the darkness, the shadow lengthens, and the camera pulls back:

> And a voice unknown, from a place unknown, speaks the words:
> "People die.
> Facts are covered in the dust of history.
> Legends are forgotten."

> The shadow creeps and creeps, ever more and more covering the stairs, and in its black darkness disappears the dead Sutter.
>
> "Legends are forgotten.
>
> But songs—
>
> Songs remain!"
>
> And as the words THE END appear on the screen, there is heard the sound of the joyous lively song that everybody knows, the song of California.[34]

As our vision disappears, we are left with an authoritative, disembodied voice and a song. The voice, projecting toward the audience from somewhere beyond the screen, alerts us to listen for the song, to understand it as the vehicle through which Sutter approaches narrative eternity.[35] With this, the song, by now very familiar, is to play again, a final time, and seal the end of the film with a formal symmetry that completes the newly forged myth. Despite the fact that the imagined film was to culminate here, at a narrative pinnacle and with its most plain political metaphor—the great individualist ruined by capital and dying alone on the steps of an institution of State—it is the audiovisual structure, again, that emerges most prominently.[36] The interaction between the unseen voice, the narrative text of legend, and the aural perpetuity of song, reminds us that Eisenstein, as ever, though deft with content, is focused most on method.

Here, with this disembodied voice, comes Eisenstein's concluding statement on this cinema experiment in sound and vision—a radical aphorism about the unmistakable power of the sound element over strictly visual narrative information: "legends are forgotten, but songs remain." Far earlier in the script, when the Song of California is heard in Mary's circus rendition, Eisenstein provides a telling description: "Her voice is unforgettable, the tune simple and easy to remember."[37] As an independent unit within Eisenstein's audiovisual montage, sound carries a mnemonic power—a persistent rhetorical force—that allows the director extended access to the filmgoer's cognitive reception of the film. This shared discourse is underscored even more by the language that seems to accompany the song throughout its appearances in the script: in reel one, it is a song "that everybody knows"; in reel seven, it is "on every man's lips"; and in the final moment, again, it is a song "that everybody knows, the song of California." Though Sutter—the legendary Sutter, of history or of the screen—vanishes into the blackness of historical narrative. What remains, and gives the film material a deep

forcefulness in the mind of the viewer/listener, is the careful collision of sound and image, the song that persists even into the darkness.

Sounds Pervade the Whole Land

Not every scene is so densely packed with audio cues and audiovisual interplay as the film's opening and finale. Throughout the *Sutter's Gold* script, however, audio cues are used as both counterpoint to and amplification of the visual imagery, often producing easily imagined scenes with acute, multisensory, and interpenetrating fields of narrative and psychological signification.[38] These continued experiments in sound technique are often subtler, tending to the asynchronicity and counterpoint (sometimes quite orchestral) that he had proposed in his earlier manifesto on sound film—a basic example comes at the top of reel six, when the words "Tra-la-la . . . / . . . tra-la-la" precede the image of a girl whose "feet dance," which is followed by a lurid "burst of male laughter," and then a shot of men squatting around frog races.[39]

Though it accomplishes nothing monumental, the staggering of nonverbal vocal utterances (singing, laughing) with the segmented close-ups and wide shots that trail them insists, just as the director had proposed in "An Unexpected Juncture," on an audiovisual structure in which sensory inputs are read not as accompaniments to one another, but as independent units operating in proximity within the same system. The entire imagination of *Sutter's Gold* is pervaded with such radically inventive uses of audio technique. This surface-oriented approach to sound is truly uniformly applied to the film's canvas—the discussion following is an attempt to categorize the way it is manifest.

Transition. The audio track is used in many places to both dislocate and stitch together visual sequences and shots. At one point in the first reel, Sutter's Swiss wife and children, whom he has abandoned, are meant to sit grieving at their cottage table, with the sound of the Angelus bell tolling outside. And then,

> Out in the dark, other bells.
>
> Peaceful bells.
>
> The dance of little bells in a beautiful landscape. The growing light of morning, a mountain landscape.
>
> Dawn.
>
> A herd of cows is grazing. It is the cowbells that ring so peacefully and musically.
>
> Among the cows in the grass sleeps Sutter, head on hand.[40]

The transition is, in effect, an audio cross-fade between the Swiss village and the open countryside through which Sutter makes his westward escape, with deep evening becoming exuberant morning in the transition, the emotional landscape transforming from the Angelus's melancholic tolling (the grief of the wife, the burden of domesticity) to the cowbell's playful jingle (the joy of the traveler, the lightness of individualism). The audio travels *across* the cut, moves the narrative along, and creates material association—in this case ironic—between disparate spaces and temporalities.

A more complex version of this effect occurs in a key tragic moment of the script as Sutter gallops desperately on his horse to save his burning ranch house—and in which his distance from the conflagration is intensified by the combination of the sound effects associated with his ride and those emanating from his fiery destination. In quick succession, the "tinkle of the trappings of the horse," "the sound of the hooves," and "the sound of the pantings from the belly of the horse" mingle with "the sound of burning," "the crackling of burning wood," "the pitiful tinkle of breaking glass," "shots," and "shouts."[41] Rather than into a scene change and a new location, this sound shuttles us back and forth across two starkly counterpoised visual spaces of dramatic tension—Sutter's actual location and his impossibly distant destination. And, unlike what would have been the case of the cross-cutting of images to accompany it, the sounds are allowed to bleed into one another. In moments of extended sound description such as this, all visuals easily drop out for half a page of the screenplay, and as readers we are left to visualize what we will from the sonic textures Eisenstein foregrounds. In a composite audiovisual image of the horse and the house, for example, the galloping literally fuses with the burning, and we find ourselves placed in two locations simultaneously, at the smoldering destination and in the charging distance, each a world more governed by sound than by vision.[42] Here we may see how the new possibilities of audio allowed Eisenstein to work with montage—particularly its primary moment of collision—in new and powerful ways.

Deformation. As in the instance just described, in which discrete sounds are bound together in one composition, many places in the script feature a distortion of sound in order to achieve an intensifying effect. Some sounds are introduced somewhat abstractly before, gradually, their meaning and origin become clearer. Or there are sounds that modulate in pitch as they grow in intensity. Reel two's amplifying and distending laughter of hunting coyotes do both. At one point Sutter,

having won a minor legal battle, "laughs with a laugh of thunder." This laughter "rolls through the streets" of San Francisco, waking the citizens, who rush to their windows.[43] This exaggerated amplification of the human voice stretches the limits of the sonic reality of the film while tapping into the larger-than-life context of Sutter's folk legend, with which the song of California inaugurated the film.

Eisenstein also attempts to deform sounds through their illogical application—an early adventure scene has Sutter grappling with some aggressive trappers in the woods while dogs perform a proxy battle some distance away. "While we see the conflict of the dogs and hear growling and barking, we also hear shrieks and the sound of Sutter's conflict in the tree-nest," the script dictates.[44] Again, the audience experiences a sort of aural double exposure, being privy to the human struggle that unfolds simultaneous with its canine equivalent, but here the effect is of escalation, as the visual confrontation of the one is cued to the vocal brutality of the other. In an even more intellectually abstracted instance, reel six's legal battle in the courthouse, which starts metaphorically on the page ("an army of lawyers," and the rest), becomes literalized through the supplanting of the diegetic sounds of the courthouse with an imposed military soundscape, in which "with the presentation of each document, is heard the sound of a faraway shell."[45] The shells are later accompanied by "the rattle of a machine gun" and "bombardment, explosions and so forth, all the actual noises of a violent battle."

Silence. Necessarily the movement from silent film to sound film reformulates the dominant process of the former mode of filmmaking into a powerful expressive tool in the context of the latter. In a sound film, moments of accentuated silence become sensually and rhetorically potent.[46] Such sudden silence is violently expressed in an early scene as Sutter wrestles with a pair of Indigenous warriors: on the heels of a barrage of gunfire and shouting, Eisenstein describes the struggle as "a now relatively soundless, ferocious, merciless fight. Broken only by the grunts of struggle and the groans of dying."[47] In a similar and disturbing scene some pages later, Sutter's traveling companion Mary is attacked by sex-starved trappers and their salivating dogs in the woods—she cowers on the ground through a rising chorus of barking, growling, and sniffing. Then: "The enormous forest. Silence. And in that silence only the woodpeckers at work."[48] The movement from saturated sounds to an empty audio expanse (and in both cases a silence that encases a much smaller, more expressive sound within it)

communicates the desperation of her situation and allows room for specific types of tension to develop. This technique reaches its apogee in the final moments of the film, as Sutter dies, and "suddenly every tune stops."[49]

Antidialogue. Eisenstein's express theoretical impulse was to avoid dialogue in favor of monologue. And indeed, most of the script is written with this principle. The physical action primarily favors gesture and expressive movement, as if for a traditional silent montage film. Audible communication is often accomplished without words, and poignantly so, in situations such as when, after a battle, Sutter "whistles for [his] dog, it answers, barking, and joins them."[50] Many whole passages of action and plot development occur with little or no words explicitly spoken: a boxing match between Sutter and an enormous adversary begins with a gong, the blows of the fight, shots of the crowd, Sutter with a knockout, the crowd howling in joy, a bag of prize money, a woman shrieking, heads turning, police charging in, Sutter grabbing the money and knocking over a lantern, the ensuing blackness, and a final shot of Sutter sneaking out of the tent.[51]

A handful of instances of direct dialogue scatter throughout the script, and there are some places where speech is vaguely reported—in an idiom more suited to prose than to scriptwriting—such as when "Sutter speaks quietly of what he has heard of the far West" or when Mary "speaks of the Golden Land."[52] And, while it may be true, as some have imagined, that lines such as these might eventually have been filled out with more explicit dialogue, such a conjecture may obscure the film's crucial intention to avoid dialogue or even to diminish the primacy of spoken dialogue when it does appear.[53] In so many of the screenplay's key moments, dialogue is presented not as a realistic instance of verbal communication, but as something like a musical refrain or chorus—a reminder that even if more synchronized speech were added, the illusion of dramatic verisimilitude was to be avoided.

The strophic tendencies of speech in the script are obvious; for example, when Sutter meets a group of artisans on the road. He inquires where they are headed, to which they say, "To Germany." He replies, "To Germany," pauses, then adds, "I too am bound for Germany."[54] Similarly, at a later stage of his westward journey, Sutter travels, whistling, with a group of pioneers, from which some travelers split off to go their own way, saying, "Good-bye. Good luck on the road." A moment later, two other travelers split off, saying, "Good-bye. Good luck on the road." And Sutter pauses his whistling with a simple "Good-bye."[55]

This exact discursive structure recurs a few scenes later as Sutter lands in San Francisco: "So this is San Francisco?" he asks of no one in particular, disembarking from his ship. Then, seeing some Mexican soldiers, he asks, "So this is San Francisco?" To which they reply, "This is San Francisco."[56] In these passages, language is employed primarily for its sonic features, structured to highlight repetition, and a slight incantatory power—and only secondarily as dialogue for communicating narrative information. The technique of musicalizing the spoken dialogue is taken even further in the several passages of the film in which the legibility of spoken language is completely effaced. When it is announced that Sutter has won his suit against the gold diggers, for example, their exclamations are described in devolving tonality:

> In the tone of their phrases more and more menacing become the people.
>
> More and more nervous their shouts. . . .
>
> Already a drunken man is shouting and waving his fists.
>
> The drunken crowd shouts with him, its words are not distinguishable.
>
> But distinguishable is the menace in its tone.[57]

Words dissolving, sound becomes a force unto itself, completely divorced from its ability to signify. It is registered strictly for its temperature, its ability to suggest emotion, violence, and impending narrative collision. The viewer, confronted with such nondenotational, abstract utterances is carried along on sensory impulses aimed not at rational cognition, but at something more primal.

Leitmotif. The musical and tonal qualities of audio are handled with a great degree of complexity in the multiple instances of leitmotif, the sonic signatures that reappear throughout the film, associated with its main character. The first such recurring motif, as discussed earlier, is the Song of California and, in a compelling passage, its variation as Mary's song. We are introduced to it when her character first appears in New York, it recurs (in a major key) as she and Sutter travel westward, and again, sung by Sutter (in a minor key) as she withers and dies in the desert, a moment Sutter reprises later as he sings the song to himself as the script's approaches its conclusion. This motif gives Mary the power to appear subtly in the narrative after her death, heightening the pathos Sutter experiences as he recalls the joys and sorrows of his journey. Establishing a network of leitmotifs not only allows Eisenstein to intensify certain topical or narrative themes (greed, love,

death, etc.) but also to interrogate the borderlands between the objective and the subjective sensory worlds of his characters. Recurring musical themes or sound collages in which a sound that had initially been created within the real fabric of a scene (say, a wagon wheel turning) returns somehow symbolically or as a psychological projection of Sutter (the same wheel turning, but amplified, and in chorus), allows this unit of sound to slide between the diegetic and the extradiegetic, and consequently between the objective and the subjective. The semantic functions of sound montage elements thus mutate and vary, another species of cross-fade, as they echo throughout the film.

A particularly powerful illustration of this: during reel five, as she travels in search of her husband, Sutter's wife Anna is endowed with a certain sorrowful leitmotif described as the "trembling sounds of a chord. A chord ever strengthening and its tone ever rising upward, trembling and sobbing."[58] Anna's grief-filled chord resounds through the rest of the screenplay, becoming a harbinger of impending death, first associated with her own ("a blow on the chord and the sobbing sound runs from its nadir to its zenith and, reaching its highest timbre, shatters—the chord bursts shrill") and later, at the climax of the script, with Sutter's.[59] Anna's leitmotif is powerful enough to directly influence the narrative—it comes from an unexplained place, and it is partly a token of the subjective psychology of the dying character and partly an omen of fate. This trembling chord is a descendent of the broken chord that resounds throughout Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*: though its presence clearly weighs on the visible world, it has no visually identifiable cause; it is both within the diegesis and without, full of possible meanings that are both activated and intensified by the timing and the multiplicity of its appearances.

Orchestration. Developing from the folk songs that begin the script, *Sutter's Gold* also includes passages of overtly described "orchestral" or "symphonic" movements in which music, vocal utterance (speaking or singing), and sound cues are arranged into carefully modulated aural compositions. After Sutter arrives in America, he is made to go through a series of odd jobs and schemes before heading westward in a wagon train—Eisenstein moves the hero quickly through a series of descriptive visuals: he is shown as a fortune teller, then a blacksmith, a shoe salesman, a dentist, a flute teacher, a butcher, a street vendor. This swift sequence of images is meant to be held together by the musical composition that runs parallel. In a crucial turn of phrase, Eisenstein states that "all these passing episodes are in sound, the tunes of one single

melody."[60] It is the sound that determines the movement, that builds the narrative, that directs the energy of the sequence:

> The tick-tock, the shouts of the crowd, the noises of the town are all arranged in a specially composed Sutter march.
>
> The sounds of the blacksmith's instruments, the girl's giggles, the neighing of the horse, the screams of the man losing his teeth, the flute, the choppings are all arranged in a rhythm although they retain their natural and recognizable sound.
>
> At last the natural sounds fade and only the music persists.[61]

Eisenstein's composition is a delicate balance of existing sounds that perform double duty: they retain their natural referent (meat is still sliced when knife meets butcher's block) while existing as pure sound coordinated within a more abstract, rhythmic purpose—with the flute lesson cleverly embedded as a musical adhesive to which the other sounds can more easily cling. Another symphonic passage soon follows, likewise using actual instrumental music to set up a symphony composed of nonverbal human sounds and available ambient noises, as Sutter establishes his holdings in Northern California. The sounds of the land's taming—saluting cannons, and loud "Huzzas"—blend with the "orchestra of Kanakas play[ing] on Hawaiian instruments the Marseillaise . . . and Sutter's favorite Swiss air." Later that night snoring workers, cooing pigeons, grasshoppers that "make their music" in the grass, and laughing women combine as a "symphony . . . [that] fills the air with a feeling of satisfaction and repletion."[62]

On the one hand, these orchestral passages are brilliant instances of Eisenstein's skill with the written word of the screenplay. The pages where such moments appear in *Sutter's Gold* are developed through a careful simulation of the eventual onscreen sound, where the indications of "roaring," "ringing," "fluttering," "trembling," "rising," "breaking," "piercing," and, vitally, "silence" all operate as a kind of musical notation. And while so effectively suggesting the complex and movable soundscape of the film, the prose of the script simultaneously establishes the visuals with which this sound will collide. And then, on the other hand, as we imagine these pinnacle moments of audiovisual orchestration, we can easily sense the new levels of emotional and intellectual possibility that the director hoped to achieve—levels that may have been entirely out of reach in the silent cinema. One symphony, built around the repetition of Sutter's name, demonstrates this: as the Gold Rush reaches its height, Sutter's name begins to be repeated over

and over by hundreds of thousands of gold-hungry travelers, who, having heard of the discovery of gold on his lands, are immigrating to California to make their fortunes. "'Sutter . . . Sutter . . .' the world endlessly re-echoes." The chant is taken up, deformed, amplified, multiplied by crowds of people "of every nation," by train engines, wagons under which "even the wheels pronounce the name," all merging together symphonically as the hero's name, climbs "into the sky, to the uppermost clouds."[63] Sutter, his actions, their implications are reflected across the entirety of the world as, taking part in this chorus, all things seem to sway in response to his movements.

The True Material of the Sound Film

The orchestral sound technique finds what promises to have been its most powerful application as it moves from the objective world and into the subjective psychological experience of the character. This is done most expressively during a scene in which Sutter observes the flood of prospectors, deep in the throes of gold fever, spilling onto his lands and carving them up. The scene begins with Sutter's lands deserted and spoiling in neglect, his workers having rushed off in search of riches. A gradual accumulation of pickaxes, water moving through sluices, panning, scraping, a medley of the land being audibly torn apart, merges into a symphony that overwhelms the visual plane of the film as "the sounds pervade the whole land." Sutter moves through this soundscape, listening to the cacophony, which is punctuated by an echoing, disembodied ring of the word *gold*. This already complex orchestration then mutates into "a symphony of new sounds" with "thousands of feet tramping on the stones," the "beat of axes," the voices of an endless "human stream," "felling trees," the "whistling of saws," "pigs screaming in slaughter." Eisenstein summarizes: "colossal are the sounds of the mob that are giving his land to destruction." The audience is meant to hear this gargantuan sonic barrage while watching Sutter, now looking suddenly old, sitting still, dumbstruck, reduced, and viewing the destruction, "maddened by these sounds."[64] Here too, in Sutter's mind, it is the sound, emphatically, that holds the power.

Sutter's impassive face presented against a soundtrack full of expressive sound, is, quite clearly, Eisenstein's first attempt at producing a cinema of interior monologue. The sounds, exaggerated to the extent that they are on the soundtrack, have been drawn into a montage of audio impressions sitting somewhere between the objective world and

Figure 7.4. Character sketches with a presumed Sutter in the center. RGALI 1923-2-170, 9. Used with permission.

the subjective. The status of the sounds has progressed from that of audio objects with clear physical referents into abstract sounds signifying the landscape of the character's interiority as much as the exterior landscape from which they originally emanate. This membrane between the objective and the subjective is exactly where Eisenstein believed the cinematic interior monologue ought to occur, and it is here that he stages *Sutter's Gold*'s climactic death scene. Now a ruined and psychologically troubled shell of the formerly robust adventurer, Sutter is shown sitting on the steps of the courthouse. He is entirely spent, having just won his yearslong suit against the prospectors who have overrun his lands. With a stooped back, he stands, his eyes staring blankly, and he hears the faint sounds of Anna's motif—the melancholy, dying chord that has repeatedly haunted the soundtrack reverberates again in his mind. Anna's death chord inaugurates a rushing sequence of disconnected sound cues that serve as audio tags that connect Sutter's imminent demise to a series of significant points that have passed in the film: Sutter hears the scrape of pickaxes in the sand, the coyotes laughing at Mary's death, the avalanche of prospectors invading his

land, the voices of the two women he loves, the screams of his son dying in a fire, wagon wheels echoing his name, the roaring mob, cannon salvos—until, "All increases in one majestic symphony whose content is the life of Johann Augustus Sutter." This cavalcade of ravaging sound is heard against the image of his face, "aroused, [with] an expression of triumph."[65] Eisenstein then synchronizes the supreme crescendo of this internal symphony with the final shuddering of Sutter's old body. As it reaches its "highest fortissimo," the chord finally snaps—"every sound is shrill, every note is piercing"—and then, abruptly, all is silent as Sutter utters a final, confused "thank you" and falls, dead, onto the courthouse steps.

The multitude of noises that have filled the film's soundtrack to this point have now become fully symbolic—the sounds all detach from their objective phenomenal causes and are given a subjective psychological value, which, in the magnitude of their resonances, suggest a full penetration of an aural interiority into the otherwise visual, external regime of the film. With his camera trained on Sutter's face, and the symphony of sounds flitting across it, Eisenstein intends to lead his audience through his character's nonverbal testament, a true interior monologue, based not on words, but on sounds for which, through previous association, he has already dictated the sense. With this sonic recapitulation of the life of his dying hero, Eisenstein concludes his first sound film and his first prolonged experiment with interior monologue, for him, "the true material of the sound film."[66] In both key examples of Sutter's interior monologue—his descent into madness and his ultimate death—the sounds that narrate his interiority are almost exclusively the sounds of trauma and of pillage. As the audience observes the minimally expressive face of the film's hero, it apprehends the sounds of a landscape, rich and verdant nature, being devastated and destroyed. Fire burns prominently in both instances, reducing all to rubble, bone, ash. This desolation reverberates, the tangible effect of rampant money lust, as it becomes internalized in the central character's cognitive turmoil. All the audience can do is watch, and listen, taking part in Sutter's psychic upheaval.

Sources suggest that there are many possible reasons why Paramount declined to produce *Sutter's Gold*—despite the acknowledged quality of its script and sound design.[67] But when one imagines the potential impact of these instances of onscreen interiority, and what they so forcefully would have implied of the devastating personal and social consequences of unbridled capitalism, one can readily conceive of a

Hollywood studio's hesitation. Montagu records that when the team tried to respond to the particulars of the studio's initial budget-based rejection of the project, they were time and again repulsed with a "shake of the head."[68] Eisenstein, writing retrospectively from the 1940s and similarly focused on the heads of the studio, cited his decision to make a fundamental connection between the despoiling of the landscape and the birth of California's wealth as the root of the problem—though to him this economic basis was entirely self-evident. He caricatures the studio producers' fears: " 'What? Let the Bolsheviks get at the subject of gold?' They shook their heads and finally shelved the project with all its ramifications."[69] But of course, Eisenstein's treatment of the American landscape *is* fundamentally anticapitalist: the untouched hills and meadows appear as likely a land of promise, development, and prosperity as they are a land of waste, decay, destruction, and immolation. As in his *Capital* and *Glass House* projects, we see that the pursuit of capital enacts all manner of ironic expropriations and enforces basic inequity.

The process is perhaps best summarized by one of only a handful of Soviet film critics to write on the *Sutter's Gold* screenplay. Mikhail Bleiman, a friend of Eisenstein, familiar with all his works, observed, "It seems to me that one could find a connection between [the *Capital*] idea and the screenplay that Eisenstein would write a few years later, *Sutter's Gold*. The screenplay was dedicated to the dialectic of capitalism's development, which in essence 'negates' itself and becomes, from a historically progressive form of economy, the destroyer of the very civilization it has created."[70] For Eisenstein, Sutter's tale is the tragedy of the American landscape and its exploitation by the American pioneer; it is a tale of both ecological and psychological destruction at the hands of economic forces. With remarkable prescience, Eisenstein's intensely aural imagination of Northern California and its prototypical millionaire is of a land of opportunity, a place where extreme wealth awaits the enterprising individual, where capital clamors with the unquenchable urge to produce ever more of the same. The tragedy of Sutter, and of Eisenstein's California, is that this drive remains somehow both terrified of and blind to the calamitous effects of a process in which unbridled individual accumulation triggers the all-consuming forces that spell its destruction.

Chapter 5

An American Tragedy

> An *unbodily substance* is the same absurdity as an *unbodily body*. *Body, being, substance*, are but different terms for the same *reality*. It is impossible to separate thought from matter *that* thinks.
>
> —Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels, *The Holy Family*, 1844

In the Museum of Modern Art's Sergei Eisenstein archive, among the materials related to the director's 1930 attempt at adapting Theodore Dreiser's novel *An American Tragedy*, pasted onto a page of notes, is a photostatic negative that, at first glance, has the appearance of a chalk drawing on slate. It is an inverted reproduction of a hand-drawn image that the director made while imagining what—for him—would be the crucial moment in the film's structure. In the drawing, an inky black square is divided diagonally by bold white lines that seem to recede into a possible horizon. Along their vectors, we can make out some forms: a long arm, with a large hanging hand that seems to dip into dark liquid, a head tilting forward and slumping downward, perhaps some legs, some feet. In the distance, beyond this figure, as our senses adjust to the picture, we see what could be reeds and their reflection in water. Written above the image, some text: "Pause—fade out" and below it, "fade in."[1] The drawing, we realize, represents Roberta, one of the tragic figures of Dreiser's novel, as she sits listlessly in a rowboat at the moment that her onscreen partner Clyde (himself absent from the image) must be hovering over her, making the fateful decision of whether to push her out of the boat and into the water.

This cruel passage is the culmination of an intense series of plot developments that both Dreiser's novel and Eisenstein's film treatment follow, and in which Clyde Griffiths, a talented young man intent on pursuing the hierarchical American dream and pulling himself out of poverty into prosperity, obtains a minor but auspicious management position at a factory only to accidentally impregnate one of the young women whom he oversees. For Clyde, fathering a child out of wedlock, with a worker, would spell the effective termination of an otherwise brilliant ascent through layers of economic mediocrity and into the ruling class, and so he hatches a desperate and dubious plan to stage Roberta's accidental death, hoping thereby to rid himself of both lover and unborn child. His idea is to lure her to the country with the promise of an elopement, but then, during a romantic boat ride on a remote lake, to throw her overboard. Eisenstein's drawing of the prone Roberta

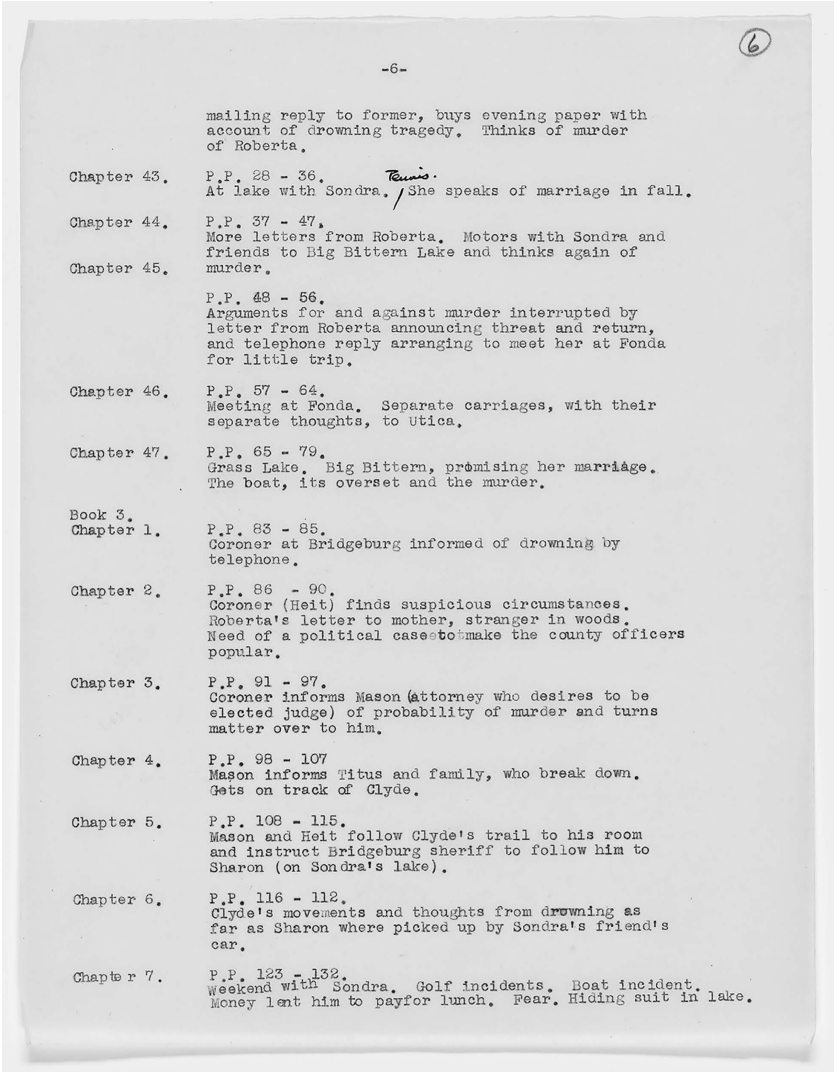
Figure 8.1. Photostat of Eisenstein's sketch for the murder of Roberta. Eisenstein [D.8]. MoMA Archives, New York. Used with permission.

at the moment before she plunges into the water captures the visceral agitation of the scene—the woman's stillness is all potential energy and is reflected by the ominously placid lake that surrounds her; all feels ready for imminent upheaval and engulfing. And the scrawls of text at top and bottom, with what they imply of the audience's ability to view this moment, reinforce this upheaval: first fade out, and then fade in.

The impression the image produces can be developed further if we collate it with two other documents from the Eisenstein archive. First, a page excerpted from a chapter synopsis prepared by Eisenstein's working group, the goal of which was to distill Dreiser's remarkably long novel to its basic movements and facilitate its pending transition into film. The key movements of the murder scene are here, starkly and systematically: "Grass Lake. Big Bittern, promising her marriage. The boat, its overset and the murder."[2] The fifteen pages these scenes occupy in Dreiser's text are distilled to just a few words: the setting and primary action of the scene. Then, in another document, some handwritten notes, a percolating of the details of the murder scene. At the top of the page, Eisenstein considers the idea of using an explicitly rendered interior monologue to give voice to Clyde's motivations, his struggle to go through with the murder that he has planned. Eisenstein writes, in English,

> Inner monologue— . . . I'll never have the courage to kill her . . .
> Never . . .(moaning) No.
> Clyde is seen sitting with his eyes closed. Hand at forehead.[3]

With this, the basic formula for the interior monologue seems to have taken shape: as words from within the character's psyche are projected onto a soundtrack, the viewer watches a still, even somewhat obscured, face. Clyde is frozen in a moment of physical inaction and mental turmoil, the agonizing copresence of stasis and turbulence meant to produce a potent emotional charge. More specific shot descriptions follow in the document. Roberta reaches out to console the obviously disturbed Clyde, and we have a close-up: "Hand on hand." Eisenstein then envisions a sequence of unintentional physical turbulence. (Clyde comes out of his reverie and jumps up at Roberta's touch, she is accidentally hit by the camera he wears around his neck, she falls back into the prow of the boat, he apologizes and tries to help her up, she jumps up and away from him, and the sudden movement capsizes the boat, and both fall into the water.) After this, the director suggests a two-shot as "both are seen" at the water's surface. The swimming Clyde



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mailing reply to former, buys evening paper with account of drowning tragedy. Thinks of murder of Roberta.

Chapter 43. P.P. 28 - 36.
At lake with Sondra. / She speaks of marriage in fall.

Chapter 44. P.P. 37 - 47.
More letters from Roberta. Motors with Sondra and friends to Big Bittern Lake and thinks again of
Chapter 45. murder.

P.P. 48 - 56.
Arguments for and against murder interrupted by letter from Roberta announcing threat and return, and telephone reply arranging to meet her at Fonda for little trip.

Chapter 46. P.P. 57 - 64.
Meeting at Fonda. Separate carriages, with their separate thoughts, to Utica.

Chapter 47. P.P. 65 - 79.
Grass Lake. Big Bittern, promising her marriage. The boat, its overset and the murder.

Book 3.
Chapter 1. P.P. 83 - 85.
Coroner at Bridgeburg informed of drowning by telephone.

Chapter 2. P.P. 86 - 90.
Coroner (Heit) finds suspicious circumstances. Roberta's letter to mother, stranger in woods. Need of a political case to make the county officers popular.

Chapter 3. P.P. 91 - 97.
Coroner informs Mason (attorney who desires to be elected judge) of probability of murder and turns matter over to him.

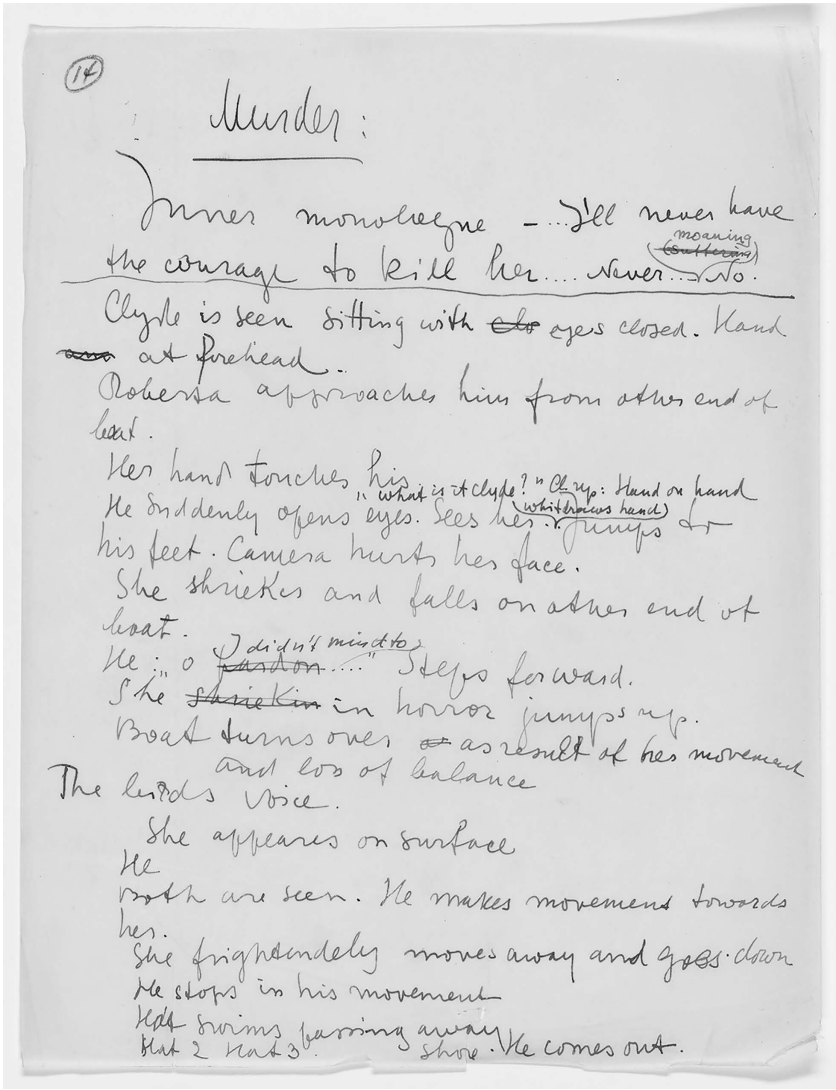
Chapter 4. P.P. 98 - 107
Mason informs Titus and family, who break down. Gets on track of Clyde.

Chapter 5. P.P. 108 - 115.
Mason and Heit follow Clyde's trail to his room and instruct Bridgeburg sheriff to follow him to Sharon (on Sondra's lake).

Chapter 6. P.P. 116 - 112.
Clyde's movements and thoughts from drowning as far as Sharon where picked up by Sondra's friend's car.

Chapter 7. P.P. 123 - 132.
Weekend with Sondra. Golf incidents. Boat incident. Money lent him to pay for lunch. Fear. Hiding suit in lake.

Figure 8.2. One sheet from a document listing the film's scenes (including murder scene) along with a page of notes containing the first suggestion of an interior monologue in *An American Tragedy*. Eisenstein [A.6] and [A.14]. MoMA Archives, New York. Used with permission.


(14)

Murder:

Inner monologue - ...I'll never have the courage to kill her.... Never... (moaning) No.

Clyde is seen sitting with ~~eyes~~ eyes closed. Hand ~~on~~ at forehead.

Roberta approaches him from other end of boat.

Her hand touches his. "What is it clyde?" Clyde: Hand or hand (white/nervous hand) He suddenly opens eyes. Sees her. Jumps to his feet. Camera hurts her face.

She shrieks and falls on other end of boat.

He: "O I didn't mean to ~~Easton~~...." Steps forward.

She ~~Stacie Kim~~ in horror jumps up.

Boat turns over as result of her movement and loss of balance

The birds voice.

She appears on surface

He

both are seen. He makes movements towards her.

She frightendely moves away and goes down

He stops in his movement

He swims passing away shore. He comes out.

Shot 2 Shot 3

Figure 8.2. (Continued)

first reaches toward the sinking Roberta, and then hesitates as she disappears into the blackness.[4]

These documents—the drawing, the schematic synopsis, and the notes choreographing camera angles and character movement—present a case study, a miniature, of Eisenstein's cinematic process as he adapts literary source material for the screen. More pertinent, they indicate, from the very genesis of the project, that Eisenstein saw in *An American Tragedy* the opportunity to push cinema's expressive possibilities to new extremes and, specifically, to find the perfect implementation of the interior monologue. We may see here the extreme care that he took in formulating the precise arrangement of this formal and thematic center for the film—the tragic murder scene and the interior monologue that sets it up—a firm place from which he would be able to construct the entire film correctly. When Paramount assigned Dreiser's novel, a very thick and very valuable literary commodity, to Eisenstein immediately after the demise of the *Sutter's Gold* project in late summer 1930, this preparatory material was produced quickly and confidently and was followed in September by the full, polished screenplay for the Dreiser film.

As he had been with Cendrars, Eisenstein was acquainted with Dreiser. The director and the author had met on two occasions, in Moscow and in New York, and Eisenstein was at least somewhat familiar with Dreiser's style and with *An American Tragedy*. So, when the proposal came from the studio to adapt and direct the novel, Eisenstein took only twenty-four hours to deliberate before accepting the challenge—though he did so, it seems, with an almost perfect certainty that the film would never be made.[5] Ivor Montagu recalls that within the Eisenstein working group there was a suspicion that studio overseers Jesse Lasky and B. P. Schulberg had not actually *read* the novel and therefore did not really understand what they were asking of the filmmakers in adapting the material—and that the producers would be duly shocked at the results of a faithful adaptation. "So we arrived at our unanimous conclusion not to drop out at this stage, but to go on, doing what we had been asked to do but which we knew was not expected or understood, with eyes wide open."[6] With this attitude of Eisenstein and his collaborators in view, we may approach the *American Tragedy* project as a true experiment in the imagination of cinema—the planning of a film that its makers had every reason to believe would never actually be made.

Eisenstein, Grigori Alexandrov, Ivor Montagu, and Eduard Tisse began their work, expecting the plug to be pulled at any moment. And with this sense of the gallows hanging over them, they set to writing the new scenario, in September 1930, just three months after having composed *Sutter's Gold*, with the same intense, production-line approach to distilling, phrasing, translating, polishing, and typing up the pages. Again, despite the collaborative process, Montagu insists on Eisenstein's sole authorship of the script, saying, "the first draft of his imagining sprang, as always, ready-armed from Sergei Mikhailich's head."[7] The speedy result was a script that featured twice as many reels as *Sutter's Gold*, was narratively expansive and formally demanding, and demonstrated Eisenstein's comfort, already evident in *Sutter*, with working in a narrative context no longer defined by a collective hero—one of the hallmarks of his earlier films.[8]

As with John Sutter in his previous project, the central character here, Clyde, is a vessel capable of conjuring and containing the pathos and narrative arc necessary for tragedy. But unlike Sutter, Clyde is not drawn in broad, Shakespearean strokes, but rather with a close application of specific and realistic psychological and social detail that make him emblematic of an entire class and therefore, ideally, able to perform both the social-dramatic function of the mass hero and the outsize function of the tragic one. In his 1935 speech to the All-Union Creative Conference of Workers in Soviet Cinema, Eisenstein summarized the general development in his treatment of character, starting from his 1927–29 work on *The General Line* through his subsequent projects pursued in Hollywood, an arc linked to what he characterizes as a movement from the epic form of early Soviet cinema to the dramatic form that would become dominant in the later 1920s:

> I discovered that all thematic interest would consist of how individual personalities and individual human intentions transform in connection with the march of revolutionary events. . . . When, after *The General Line*, I began to think about the future direction of my work, I undertook a creative orientation toward personalities and toward images of people. The introduction of [the character] Marfa Lapkina in *The General Line* was a kind of "embryo" for the "hero" that would be demanded by my future works. This all coincides with my trip abroad. And the concrete plans for this relate to our screenwriting work accomplished in Hollywood.[9]

Marfa Lapkina was perhaps Eisenstein's first traditional film hero, a human figure with a will and psychology that was distinct from her participation in a mass body. But, since her role in the script was mostly determined by external action, she had little need of psychological interiority. Eisenstein's shift in character development is demonstrated by the appearance in his work of "monumental personalities and monumental characters" like John Sutter, a larger-than-life figure who must pass through a sequence of extreme personal transformations over time, a dynamism of individuality that, as Eisenstein says, leads the hero "further and further away from the revolutionary mass."[10] But, according to the director, it was only with *An American Tragedy* that he confronted the development of a hero who could "represent the most complex growth and formation of human character . . . the gradual laying bare of a young man of the twentieth century, who, finding himself in a circumstance of labor alienation and other conditions characteristic of the bourgeois social structure, is gradually driven into criminal behavior."[11]

What Eisenstein and his team considered to be a maneuver of ideological sharpening that they performed on the text seems, surprisingly, not to have cooled the enthusiasm of the studio heads when they read the script. Schulberg considered Eisenstein's *An American Tragedy* "the best scenario that Paramount had ever had." Lasky was thrilled and wanted to put it into production right away, and chief story editor David O. Selznick described the Russian filmmakers' work in a memo to Schulberg as "the most moving script I have ever read."[12] But as the filmmakers had expected before the adaptation began, the appraisal of superlative quality in the screenplay did little to ensure the film's actual approval for production, and, as it turned out, that same high quality and clarity may just have ensured the opposite: Selznick's memo to Schulberg concludes with the counsel "let's not put more money than we have . . . into a subject that will appeal to our vanity through the critical acclaim that must necessarily attach to its production but that cannot possibly offer anything but a most miserable two hours to millions of happy-minded young Americans."[13]

Indeed, the filmmakers' premonition had been correct; the studio was not willing to risk the happiness of their audiences for a foray into disturbing subject matter—even if they would be doing so with the work of a possible genius. Eisenstein, with retrospective chagrin, reported that what the studio had actually wanted was "a simple and powerful whodunit about a murder . . . and about the love between a boy and

a girl," not something Eisenstein and his collaborators were likely to supply.[14] What we are left with, then, is the legacy of a very short-lived project, materially residing in archives in New York City and Moscow, surviving in the form of studio correspondence, plot synopses, scene sketches, director's notes, drawings, manuscript drafts of scenes from the script, a full screenplay in English (132 pages), as well as one in Russian, and a bundle of notes in Eisenstein's hand on the topic, crucial to the adaptation, of the interior monologue. Together, all this material provides us a glimpse, whether a "miserable" or a "most moving" one, into the *American Tragedy* that Eisenstein imagined.

Only the Sound Film Is Capable

The necessity of crafting a film around a central hero who could be a complex "human character" while also being "characteristic" of general social realities required Eisenstein to place a firm emphasis on an objective, socially determined external reality, the interior psychological *subjectivity* of which, then, would necessarily be demonstrated through a sequence of cinematic techniques. As it had been in the case of John Sutter, with Clyde Griffiths it was Eisenstein's application of his newly discovered techniques in audiovisual montage that became essential for deepening and broadening the character. For *An American Tragedy*, it was no longer a matter of raising the character to the level of myth or epic, but of endowing that character with the capacity to both realistically demonstrate the machinery of social forces and powerfully depict individual psychological experience—as Eisenstein would later say, "only the sound film is capable of reconstructing . . . all the specifics of a train of thought."[15] Eisenstein's audiovisual experimentation in this imagined film would allow him to go beyond merely showing "external manifestations" and approach the possibility of revealing "what was happening inside Clyde," leading up to and after the decisive moments of the narrative.[16]

An American Tragedy's employment of sound counterpoint, from scene to scene, is not nearly so ambitious as *Sutter's Gold*—it is less a persistent element from scene to scene—but rather a technique that manifests as a calculated maneuver at important junctures, at moments when the plot requires a potent expression of Clyde's subjective emotions and thoughts. Often this occurs in moments where recurrent music or audio cues prove to be neither diegetic nor nondiegetic, but rather a symptom of his psychological interiority. For example, when

a young Clyde earns his first income as a bellboy at a Kansas City hotel, an unknown voice screams out wildly "Fifty cents!" as an ecstatic smile brightens Clyde's face and an orchestra "is heard playing a wild, happy march."[17] Later, when Clyde and the ill-fated Roberta consummate their sexual infatuation and accidentally conceive, Clyde hears the same majestic music blaring in the room.[18] When he approaches a druggist about obtaining an abortion pill, children's singing voices on the radio become unbearably loud to him; when he steps outside, their singing turns to laughter.[19] He goes to another drugstore, only to hear a child's voice on the radio proclaiming loudly its love for its mother and father and the sunshine and the forest. Later, in court, as Clyde sits abject, being questioned brutally by a prosecuting lawyer, he suddenly hears his distant mother's voice dispensing spiritual advice and praying for him. When the verdict of his guilt is read, Clyde hears, in succession, the voice of each of the eleven jurors confirming their agreement about his guilt and condemnation.[20] Or, a more formal example: as he is transported from his prison cell to the execution facilities at Sing Sing prison (a name that is perfect in its phonic suggestiveness), Clyde hears the train's engine and its wheels chugging along below him, repeating the mantra "Death, death, death."[21]

These instances of rhythmic repetition and quasi-verbal evocation remind us of the power of music in Eisenstein's conception of the sound film. And, indeed, as with *Sutter's Gold*, the script for *An American Tragedy* opens and closes with a song. Like the previous film, *An American Tragedy* begins with a simple song that gradually builds into an audio symphony, but whereas the chorus that opens the former film had emanated from some extradiegetic space, this one emanates from the film's own narrative fabric: "The low inspired voice of a woman is heard rising and falling in the singsong of a chanted sermon. Gradually there mingles with the voice the sounds of the city and the noises of the street. The siren of an ambulance—the anxious ringing of a streetcar. The characteristic cries of newsboys. The tooting of automobiles. Gruff music through radio horns."[22]

Only once the setting has been established in the rising volume of sharp, specific urban acoustic details does the screen burst into a series of views of the city, meant to show a contrast between urban life and the song of the sermon. The woman's voice belongs to Clyde's mother—a zealot, the head of a mission, with noble intentions and rigid expectations. Eisenstein explicitly connects her with song throughout the screenplay and intentionally emphasizes her uncanny fanaticism in

order to monumentalize her, to make her voice the voice of American dogmatism and give it both "sacrificial grandeur" and expose its "social and class premises."[23] Though the opening technique is similar to that of *Sutter's Gold*—a black screen gradually overwhelmed by an audio composition, and afterward contrasted by a series of visuals—some distinctions are immediately clear. In place of the mood of an epic folktale is a preponderance of realistic detail. The song is rooted in the diegesis: a woman whom we soon see onscreen produces the voice for the song. This immediately diverges from the heightened, extranarrative sonic emergence of Sutter's Song of California. The contrast that the intruding images then impose is not one that is epic (as when we had swerved from legendary California to a visually conventional Switzerland), but rather one that expresses the realistic irony of urban life: the grit of the city juxtaposed with the holy aspirations of some of its inhabitants.

The film introduces Clyde, its central character, much as Sutter had been introduced in his film, with a song that opens the film—passersby in the city stop to see what the singing is, and soon both the onlookers and the camera focus on Clyde, a small boy ashamed of his mother's singing, intensely aware of the scrutiny his mother's song elicits from the inhabitants of the city. Just as Sutter had been introduced through the gaze of the Swiss townsfolk, we are introduced to Clyde's through the urban observers, but whereas Sutter had been utterly inscrutable in his onscreen debut, Clyde is revealed, vulnerable and frightened. And, unlike with Sutter's Song, Clyde's sermon-song is not sung about him but rather expresses lyrically the central conflict of obedience and transgression that will define his character ("The sweet love of Jesus" versus the "horror of sin").

Likewise, at the close of the film, a symphony of sounds, established in a bleak psychological realism, precedes and accompanies the final moments of Clyde's existence, years later, before he is executed in an electric chair. In *Sutter's Gold*, the sound that closed the film had swelled in an overwhelming recounting of its hero's life, at the climax of which Sutter's body had crumpled; here, a series of increasingly emphatic sounds, all existing in narrative real time, communicate the tragic, rational end of the debased hero. The clatter of prison bars and grates being lifted and shut, an iron door closing, Clyde shouting from the electric chair his desire to live, the closing of the outer and inner gates of the prison, all while his mother sings gospel songs in the next room, and then—powerfully—a sudden void of all sound as even the grasshoppers and birds that had been dully humming are silenced. When the ambient

sound is removed, it is, in effect, a metaphor for the oxygen leaving Clyde's lungs, the sliding and slamming of the gates as if the sight is leaving his eyes. As the final shutter closes over the prison entrance, darkness envelops the screen and blindness and deafness reign for a beat. Then an audiovisual surge of sensual acuity: "A sharp crackle and the sharp light of an electric contact—and again quiet—again blackness."[24] The death of the character is depicted by a primal charge of electricity that, in order, reawakens the viewer's hearing ("crackle") and sight ("light") and then snuffs them out again in silence and blackness.

Eisenstein follows the extreme shock of this moment with a coda that serves as a pendant to the scene that had opened the film: Clyde's mother, now elderly, is shown for a moment with her remaining family members, standing at the same street corner where the film had begun, singing an evangelical hymn. This song, sung by missionaries, is given the final, emphatic place of expression in the script; "everybody's happy" is the refrain, and the words are meant to echo with arch irony through the final seconds of the film as the screen slowly fades to black. The sensory and semantic overdetermination of these songs, as sung by the mother, imply the invisible machinery of determinism from which Clyde, buffeted by forces beyond his control, could never have extracted himself.

The process of adapting *An American Tragedy* hinged on locating the thematic essence of Dreiser's novel and translating it for the needs of the film camera—and Eisenstein's demanding camera was now accompanied by an equally demanding microphone. By the final page of the script, as its reader imagines what would have been the sum of its audiovisual signals and devices—uncanny sound cues, audio distortions, sonic projections, pathos-filled songs—a distinct and separate image arises, of Eisenstein wrestling with the literary narrative inherited from Dreiser, attempting to inject into it a strictly cinematic means of depicting the character's interiority. The stakes for these maneuvers of adaptation could not be higher aesthetically or politically: a necessarily intensified set of tragic forces, and a clearer, sharper ideological thrust.

Making a Zola from a Dreiser

Eisenstein's transposition of the novel's plot into the screenplay faithfully traces Clyde's route from the religious background of his childhood, his running away from home as a youth, his rise through the ranks at a factory, his courtship with a wealthy society heiress named

Sondra, and his accidental and decisive rendezvous with the factory girl Roberta. As in the novel, Clyde hatches a murder plot—the overturning of a boat with Roberta in it—that does not go exactly as planned, although Roberta does drown. And, as in the novel, Clyde is quickly apprehended for the crime. Beginning with the murder, however, and the events that immediately follow, Eisenstein's version begins to diverge from Dreiser's original. The final third of the novel follows Clyde's highly publicized trial and ends in his eventual execution by the state. The book is both extremely long and dense with information ("stodgy" but full of "immense power," according to Montagu).[25]

For Eisenstein, it was too ideologically evenhanded: writing in *Method* in 1943, he would recall his realization that the strain of aesthetic and political impartiality in aspects of the novel meant that he would have to heighten the social dynamics of its narrative for the film: "It wasn't Clyde that I considered to be the main 'villain' and criminal. But instead—quite naturally—I considered it to be the objective social reality that gives birth to all Clydes, that breaks their psyches, and then, when they 'fall,' mercilessly grinds them up in the name of some abstract justice."[26] For Eisenstein, then, Clyde's downfall in the novel is too much the result of the specific decisions of a specific person—there was too much easy and isolated causality and not enough general tendency. He wanted to broaden the character's actions and the dynamic through which his punishment pursues him—to make the "American tragedy" not just the tragedy of an individual, but rather the tragedy of all.

In a 12 September 1930 letter written from Hollywood to Léon Moussinac in France, Eisenstein described his enthusiasm for his new project: "I'm tremendously taken by the script for Dreiser's *American Tragedy*! The problem is not simple: make an Émile Zola from a Theodore Dreiser! That's why it's so hard for me to find time to write [letters]."[27] This framing of the problem of adaptation may be superficially amusing, but it alludes to something vital about Eisenstein's convictions and treatment of the world of Dreiser's tragedy. In 1932, Eisenstein recalled his adaptation of the Dreiser novel, which he characterized as "99 percent a statement of facts and one percent attitude toward them," and then writes that in order to make such material work onscreen, "the epic of cosmic truth and objectivity had to be 'screwed together' into a tragedy, something that was unthinkable without the direction and the emphasis provided by a particular world view."[28] To perform this "screwing together," Eisenstein realized that he needed to drastically change the nature of the narrative world into one in which

"tragedy is heightened to an almost Grecian 'blind Moera, fate' that, once summoned into action, will not relax her grip on the person who has provoked her. . . . In this crushing of an individual human being by a 'blind' cosmic 'principle,' by the inertia of the process of laws over which he has no control, we find one of the basic premises of classical tragedy, the representation of the passive dependence of man at that time on natural forces."[29]

Eisenstein then further specifies these "natural forces" in historical-materialist terms, quoting Engels that "in the commercial world of competition, success or failure does not depend on a man's activity or cleverness, but on circumstances uncontrollable to him."[30] In other words, cause and choice are dissociated from outcome, and human fate is organized by a social machinery far outside the human view. Eisenstein reads Engels's maxim as dramatically flexible: the concept may be played to equal effect on film as the tragedy of socioeconomic determinism or in a way that approaches a more classical mode, in which the instrument of tragedy appears as something more like a supernaturally governed fate.

Dreiser's *An American Tragedy* already suggests within the arrangement of its plot the possibility for a thematic movement between the logical determinism of realistic social forces and the inescapability of a more irrationally decreed destiny. Over the course of the novel, Dreiser slowly accumulates plausible events, realistic images, and details of character that, taken together, seem to seal Clyde's fate far beyond his ability to act in anything but a preordained manner, a structure in which, as Robert Penn Warren once described it, "the logic" of character becomes "the poetry of destiny."[31] It was Eisenstein's intention to focus the novel's gradual marshaling of Clyde's destiny into an acute, compact mechanism of inevitability—"the machine of bourgeois justice" and its shadowy partner, inexorable tragic fate—to be presented through a fraught cinematic collision of the hero's audible thoughts and his visible actions.

Eisenstein pursues his intention in the script by fusing details of the inner psyche of the individual character with the phenomenal world in which the character appears. The director thought of such fusing as "the abolishing of the distinction between subject and object in the exposition of the hero's experiences" and a "'sliding' from the subjective to the objective and back."[32] The effect he sought to achieve in this elision of perceptual boundaries is the same as the one he attempted to produce at the conclusion of *Sutter's Gold*—a composition in which

units of audio montage are deployed as symptoms of an objective reality (pickaxes in sand, wheels crushing the earth) and then assimilated into the subjective psychology of the hero (the sounds reinscribed into the "maddening symphony" of the land's destruction).

The technique here is to deploy objective phenomena, having them act as indicators of subjective experience; Eisenstein would later observe this very technique in the works of Émile Zola. In a passage of *Method* written in 1943, Eisenstein analyzes the general tendency in Zola's novels to produce characters that seem to merge with their environment, calling it a method of painterly "diffuseness" in which "man and environment" become interdependent: "Zola's person is inseparable from the environment; the person's carriage, his chair, his reflection in a random puddle or some part of him swallowed in shadow are features every bit as integral to his representation as are his hands and feet, brows and hair, personality traits and measurements."[33]

In just the same way, Clyde's psychological traumas are seen against a background where psychological and material worlds interpenetrate, and the psychological reality of the subject pulses throughout his environment. Eisenstein's articulation of Zola's technique is echoed in another 1943 passage of *Method*, in which he asks the question "What makes *Ulysses* so captivating?" The answer is clear: "The inimitable sensuality of the text's effects (in many ways surpassing even the animalistic sensual charm of my favorite, Zola)."[34] As we know from the *Sutter's Gold* project and the discoveries made in its composition, for Eisenstein the key to Joyce's visceral power, his value for the cinema, was the technique of the interior monologue—itself a means of merging the objective and subjective. By bringing together the techniques of these two writers he admired—Joyce's interior monologue and Zola's diffuseness of subject and environment—and applying them to Dreiser's realistic novel, Eisenstein's establishes an intensely sensory groundwork for his imagined film.

Interpenetrations: Chesterton and Dostoevsky

The inspiration that the director took from literary sources for the basic atmosphere of his developing film appears not to end with Zola and Joyce. His later description of the technique used by British writer G. K. Chesterton, the well-known author of mystery stories, may be seen as a perfect counterpart to the task he had set himself of producing an uncanny ambience in certain of *An American Tragedy*'s scenes

(the murder scene in particular). They are the scenes that would require the most "diffuseness" between the physical world and the subjectivity of the hero. In *Method*, Eisenstein writes of the "atmosphere of ominous mystery" Chesterton conjures in his stories: "Step by step, a shift is produced in the reader to the interpretation of phenomena according to the outward image of objects . . . and not according to their contents or function. . . . The very 'mysteriousness' of the atmosphere seems to be built by gradually developing this mood in the reader through . . . the buildup of situations or seemingly accidental confluences of circumstance . . . (for example, a dog that starts to bark at the same moment that a murder happens to take place elsewhere)."[35]

The director focuses here on what he sees as essential in Chesterton's mysteries and their resolutions, the intermingling in them of rational and irrational logics, of contiguity posing as causality, of the tonally resonant detail overshadowing the functional one. Through all this, the reader is immersed in a primal atmosphere of uncanniness, and, as in Zola, subjective impressions and objective reality may interpenetrate. For Eisenstein, this is "the primal (and therefore effective!) basis" of Chesterton's stories, and one that he attempts to emulate in the atmosphere of the murder scene—it has an objective logic, but it is submerged in the superficial appearance of the supernatural (of, for instance, fate). In the instance he cites in Chesterton, it is the barking of a dog that suggests a mysterious and illogical connection to a murder; in *An American Tragedy*, he uses a similar natural detail to instigate this primal misprision: the cry of a waterbird.

In the drafts of the script, we see Eisenstein pushing the sound world of the imagined film toward an even greater degree of subjective distortion, in which image and audio cue create a diffuse environment that might plausibly support its slippages between objective and subjective, specifically the carefully planted instances of interior monologue embedded in the script. In other words, the director's task was to prepare the viewer to properly experience the audiovisual mechanism of the hero's thoughts. Eisenstein would recall, ecstatically, the experience of composing the montage lists for the interior monologues: "Like thought itself, they sometimes proceeded through visual images, with sound, synchronized or nonsynchronized . . . sometimes like sounds, formless or formed as representational sound images . . . now suddenly in the coinage of intellectually formed words, as 'intellectual' and dispassionate as words that are spoken, with a blank screen, a rushing imageless visuality . . . now in passionate disjointed speech,

nothing but nouns or nothing but verbs; then through interjections, with the zig zags of aimless figures, hurrying along in synchronization with them."[36]

Sonic features proliferate in this montage, both sounds of diegetic origin and sounds that emerge distorted or otherwise, linguistic and prelinguistic from Clyde's own psychology. The director's handwritten notes for the key scenes that set up and include Clyde's interior monologue do indeed signal such sounds extensively. In the pivotal murder scene, for example, sounds of nature—including, in one emphatic note, "the bird's voice"—seem to flood the scene, taking on the subjective psychological experience of the hero, as his interiority projects itself outward onto the environment.[37]

The voice of this waterbird, floating high above the rest of the soundtrack and described in the screenplay as "the long-drawn-out booming cry of a water bird," evolves cannily from Dreiser's original, where it had also appeared, endowed with heavy portent that Clyde himself interprets. In the novel, a few days before the murder, Clyde traveled with Sondra and some friends to a lake that, it occurs to him, might be a suitable place to enact the horrible plan that had just begun forming in his mind. At the very moment that he muses over the practicability of murdering Roberta at this lake, he hears "a weir-weir, one of the solitary water birds of this region utter[ing] its ouph and barghest cry. . . . It was so very different to any birdcry he had ever heard before." The cry upsets Clyde, and he asks his traveling companions what the sound was. When it turns out that they had not noticed the sound, he replies, "Gee! That was a queer sound. It makes me feel creepy."[38] The unearthly bird returns again with its "haunting cry" the moment before Clyde must murder Roberta and, in this moment, Dreiser gives it a verbal articulation:

> Kit, kit, kit, Ca-a-a-ah!
> Kit, kit, kit, Ca-a-a-ah!
> Kit, kit, kit, Ca-a-a-ah![39]

The bird's call forces Clyde to wonder at its presence in the scene: "What was it sounding—a warning—a protest—condemnation? The same bird that had marked the very birth of this miserable plan."[40] Here Clyde's interpretation—and anthropomorphosis—of the bird stands in contrast to the otherwise realistic fabric of the novel, and its unreality serves to highlight his disturbed psychological state. When the bird's call appears a third and final time, it is immediately after the murder, a death knell

for Roberta and a condemnation of Clyde, resounding across the lake, "weird, contemptuous, mocking."[41] In Dreiser's novel, the uncanniness of the scene plays verbally—in the bird's "Kit, kit, kit, Ca-a-a-ah!" we sense a phonetic, pseudo-semantic structure, while Clyde's thoughts, though deranged, are cogent. Despite Clyde's irrational response to the bird, the realistic logic of the scene is preserved.

In Eisenstein's hands, however, as he moves this material toward its cinematic incarnation, it obtains a more primal look. In the director's notes in which Eisenstein develops (in Russian) the murder scene, we see "the bird's cry" (*krik ptitsy*) inserted with emphatic arrows into the scene, first in pencil and then in type. Most important, by the time we reach the screenplay itself, it becomes clear that it isn't Clyde (as the prism through which the film viewer accesses the story) who must interpret the uncanniness of the bird's call, but the viewers themselves who are left to experience it directly: the long-drawn-out cry pierces the scene "as the boat drifts almost soundlessly by the dark pines and Clyde's face is racked by the struggle within him."[42] Clyde, in fact, is not meant to respond at all to the bird's call, but because of its prominence, isolated as it is in the soundtrack, the film spectator inevitably must. The second time it appears, it is after the boat has overturned; the cry rings out while both Clyde and Roberta are underwater, by physical logic unable to hear such a bird. And again, the viewer must encounter its uncanniness. Finally, the third time, the screenplay presents "the long-drawn booming cry of the far-away bird," and in this case against a sequence of two shots. One, a close-up, is of a straw hat, floating "on the mirror-like calmness of the water." This is followed immediately by an extreme wide shot: "The wilderness of the forest, the motionless hills. Dark water barely lapping against the shore."[43] In the third instance, again it is not Clyde who is the focus of the uncanny bird and its cry, because he does not appear, and it is by no means Roberta, who is now forever under the water. The target of the uncanny audio has been shifted subtly from the hero to the spectator, who, in encountering the stark cry against images redolent of human violence and nature's stillness, are immersed in the atmosphere themselves, and endow this audio unit with a distress that emanates from their own psyches.

Roberta's murder, as we have seen, is the central plot point of *An American Tragedy*. And yet Clyde's sinister machinations in the screenplay—his plans for how to lure Roberta to the lake, how to avoid looking suspicious, how to stage the accident, and how to escape and return to

struggle within him, there rises the long-drawn-out booming cry of a waterbird.

26. "Kill - kill" triumphs, and there passes through his mind the memory of his mother. "Baby - baby" comes his childhood and as "Don't kill - don't kill" rises he hears "Baby boy - baby boy" in the so different voice of Sondra, and at the image of Sondra and the thought of all that surrounds her "Kill - kill" grows harder and insistent, and with the thought of Roberta importunate it grows still harsher and shriller, and then the face of Roberta now, aglow with faith in him and her great relief, and the sight of the hair he has so loved to caress and "Don't - don't kill" grows and tenderly supplants the other and now is calm and firm and final. Ending the conflict. Sondra is lost forever. Never, never now will he have the courage to kill Roberta.

27. And we see Clyde as he sits in blank despair and the misery of renunciation. He raises his face from his hands.

An oar drags in the water. In his left hand he holds the camera.

And Clyde's face is so wild with misery and so stricken by the struggle that has passed behind it that Roberta crawls anxiously toward him and takes his hand in hers.

28. Clyde opens his eyes suddenly and sees near him her anxious, tender face. With an involuntary movement of revulsion he pulls back his hand and jumps up quickly. As he does so the camera, quite accidently, strikes her in the face. Roberta's lip is cut; she cries out and falls back in the stern of the boat.

"I'm sorry, Roberta, I didn't mean to," and he makes a natural movement toward her. Roberta is afraid. She tries to get up, loses her balance, and the boat oversets.

29. Once more rings out the long-drawn booming cry of the bird. The overset boat floats slowly on the surface of the water.

Figure 8.3. The rendition of the murder scene in the full screenplay. RGALI 1923-2-173, 81–82. Used with permission.

Roberta's head appears above the surface.

Clyde comes up. His face showing terrible fright, he makes a movement to help Roberta.

Roberta, terrified by his face, gives a piercing cry and, splashing frantically, disappears under the water. Clyde is about to dive down after her, but he stops, and hesitates.

30. And a third time the long-drawn booming cry of the far-away bird.

On the mirror-like calmness of the water floats a straw hat.

The wilderness of forest, the motionless hills. Dark water barely lapping against the shore.

31. A noise of water is heard and Clyde is seen swimming to the shore. Reaching it, he first lies upon the earth, then slowly sits down, forgetting to lift one foot out of the water.

Gradually he begins to shiver, the shivering increases, he pales and makes a familiar gesture, that gesture that he makes when frightened or suffering. He shrinks into himself and hides his head in his shoulders. He notices the foot in the water and lifts it out. He begins to think, and with that, stops trembling. And the voice of his thought.

"Well, Roberta is gone - as you desired - and you didn't kill her - an accident - liberty - life - "

And then very low, tenderly, as if whispering into his ear, the voice says:

"Sondra."

And Clyde closes his eyes. And in the darkness:

Figure 8.3. (Continued)

town unnoticed—are clearly less interesting to Eisenstein and his collaborators than the way in which Clyde comes to the internal decision to commit this murder and his subjective experience of the moment in which the horrible event occurs.[44] For Eisenstein, the most crucial aspect of the murder is that it be somehow both premeditated and accidental. To tread this line between action and intention, as well as to push Clyde into a space of generalization where his path to murder functions as more than just a parable for the downfalls of personal vice, Eisenstein invents a simple yet fundamental change for this major dramatic turning point of the novel.

The decisive detail is that at the final moment, per Eisenstein, Clyde decides not to murder Roberta. And yet somehow the plan continues inexorably without him; she falls from the boat and drowns. Recalling this alteration some years afterward, Eisenstein writes,

> The culminating point of the novel in the strictly Dreiserian sense was not good enough for me.
>
> I needed to *internally* "whitewash" Clyde, but leave him worthy of punishment. By night I thoroughly racked my brains beneath the unrelenting chatter of cicadas in the shrubberies of our little house in Beverly Hills (Hollywood) [Eisenstein's parenthesis]. Finally, the concept was honed. Clyde *gives up on* his thoughts and intentions to commit the murder in the boat.
>
> And then the accident occurs.
>
> Clyde actually *is not capable* of saving Roberta.
>
> Clyde is actually *innocent*.
>
> But the machinery of the planned crime takes him in its teeth.
>
> Guilty *only in intention*, in his plan that he makes and later abandons, he ends up carrying the responsibility for the crime as though he had actually committed it—and as such truly *tragically* ends his life in the electric chair.[45]

This slight change in the hero's path of action has immense implications for the script; what had been a "tragic" (extremely distressing) but realistic crime story has been elevated. Now Clyde is endowed with the power of the general, he is not merely himself, but a representative, as the director had wanted, of "all Clydes." The evil force of the film ceases to be the hapless and aspirational hero's dark drive toward vice and shifts to the diseased mechanisms of the society that he fetishizes but of which he is merely a product. The paradoxical result of this subtle change—the accidental premeditated murder—also underwrites the

sensation of a punishing fate by which the viewer is made to feel the tragic consequences of the character's actions. It is as though he were doomed to execution from the beginning and not as the result of the familiar cycle of temptation, sin, and judgment that had been the primary mechanism of the novel.

Though only retroactively, Eisenstein later recognized that in this maneuver of adaptation he had unintentionally performed an act of "Dostoevskyism" on the Dreiser text: he had transformed Clyde into a character for whom a metaphorical transference happens between intention and action, between a desire to murder and the actual act—and that the two become equivalent through this transference. This, he would later point out, occurs in just the same way in *The Brothers Karamazov*: both for Ivan, whose silent and abstract wish for his father's death is enacted in the actual murderous actions of Smerdyakov, and for Mitya, who, in the crucial moment, abandons his actual plan to kill his father but is then accused of the act, willingly accepting the guilt for it. This confluence of intention and action, the equating of thought and deed, just as in Dostoevsky's novel, serves to create an atmosphere that undermines the simple causality of realism, suggests the unseen figure of Fate, and, ultimately, in the case of Clyde, renders the character unable to properly defend himself. Just as Mitya Karamazov is overwhelmed by the guilt he feels in having taken steps *toward* murdering his father, Clyde is paralyzed by the extreme guilt that arises from his homicidal intentions—forsaken only moments before Roberta's death—and this guilt becomes equivalent to the guilt he would have felt had he *actually* murdered her.[46]

This transitive operation, between action and intention, between the psychological and the material, is typified in a scene between the incarcerated Clyde and his mother. This moment not only demonstrates that the interpenetration of action and intention holds force beyond Clyde's own subjective trauma, engaging his mother's Christian values in the process but it also perfectly articulates Eisenstein's imagination of the possibilities of sound film. On death row, a disconsolate Clyde regresses to an infantile state, cradled in his mother's embrace:

> "Everything will be all right, Clyde," she croons, stroking the head in her lap. "Everything will be all right. You didn't do it. You didn't do it."

"Yes, mummy, I didn't do it." The warmth of her faith, the tenderness of her protecting hand, her soothing voice envelop Clyde. He is a child of years ago.

"You didn't do it. . . . My boy would never think of such a thing."

Clyde snuggles closer. Gone is the tension of his long ordeal. His soul relaxes. The comforting hand caresses him.

"I did—think about it, mummy," says Clyde. And the mother's caress slows, her fingers have become stiff and her face set. And Clyde rubs his cheek against the hands that are now of wood.

"But I never—never—never did it, mummy."[47]

The critical opposition of *thinking* versus *doing* emerges forcefully here. The tension between the two concepts—the psychological/subjective and the material/objective—appears as a vast gap that alternately gapes and is bridged. Eisenstein frames the mother's perception of the equivalence of thoughts and actions as religious rigidity, a parody of the dialectic ("the Christian sophism of the unity of the ideal [a deed in thought] and the material [a deed *de facto*]") and uses it as the impetus toward the final tragedy of the film.[48] Devastated by her son's admission of *internal* guilt (the thought of murder), the mother is unable, when attempting to plead for a stay of execution, to answer convincingly the governor's question about her opinion of Clyde's *actual* guilt or innocence. In fact, in the very moment when she has the opportunity to make her final plea, Eisenstein provides a powerful glimpse of her interiority with a subtle instance of audiovisual contrast: when the governor asks her whether she can tell him "from the bottom of her soul" whether her son is innocent, she begins to reply, but then pauses, eyes wide, hearing (just as the audience was to hear from the soundtrack) Clyde's voice admit, in her mind, "I did—think about it, mummy," and she is unable to speak any further. The very thought that Clyde had been able to *imagine* murdering Roberta makes his mother incapable of any decisive action. Without his mother's appeal for mercy, the governor has no reason to stay the execution, and Clyde's tragic fate, his path to the electric chair, is set.

With the categories of thought and action having become nearly indistinguishable, the way was now open for Eisenstein to approach a critique of the social structure of capitalism. The devastating denouement of his *American Tragedy* should be imagined by means of the sensory specificity possible only to cinema, with the tools of audiovisual counterpoint: the camera—which records actual deeds—and the microphone—which records those that are merely thought.

Internal Conflict, External Stoniness

What Eisenstein saw as cinema's unique ability to formally portray the possible rift between thought and action is a manifestation of his essential formula of the audiovisual: counterpoint. Nowhere is this more apparent than the device with which the director seems to have motivated the entire film, Clyde's interior monologue. In order that the film's viewer apprehend this complex manipulation of Clyde's intentions, to kill or not to kill, his interior monologue becomes a necessary formal feature, most particularly in the murder scene—it is the vehicle that displays the shifting interior dialectics of intention and action, and it does so with utmost narrative poignancy. Counterpoint is the guiding

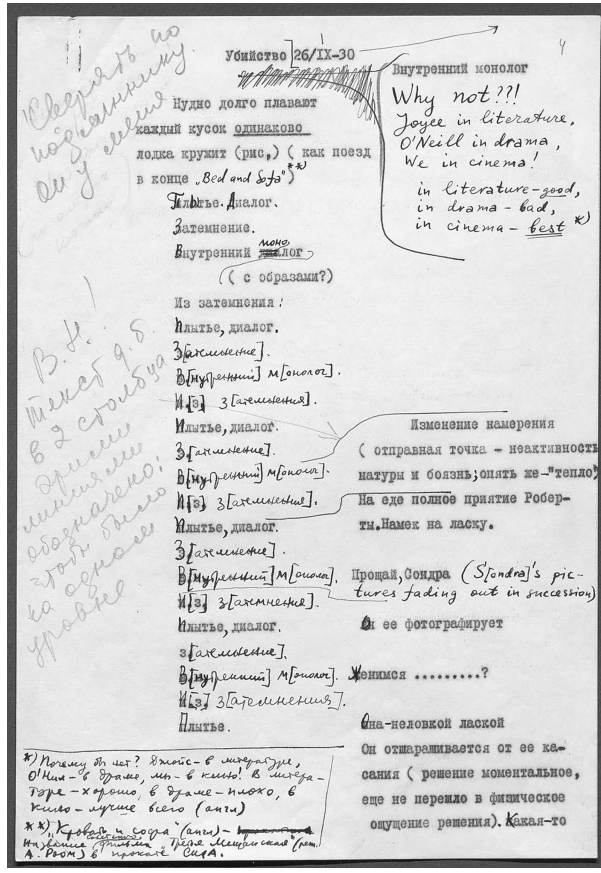


Figure 8.4. Director's notes containing Eisenstein's declaration of cinema's unique suitability for representing the interior monologue of characters. RGALI 1923-2-175, 4. Used with permission.

principle of Eisenstein's conception of the interior monologue, the inner (essence) counterpoising the outer (surface). As he would later recall of his plans for the scene, "I wanted to audiovisually recreate Clyde's full internal conflict in the presence of his *externally stony* face."[49]

In his director's notes, dated 28 September 1930, Eisenstein has drawn up a long montage list for Clyde's interior monologue. It follows a strict pattern of audiovisual alternations and presents a hypnotic movement between the physical world, external speech, nothingness, and internal speech—over and over through this cycle during the lead-up to the murder.[50] The scene's shots are meant to alternate: Clyde rowing, dialogue with Roberta, blackout, Clyde's interior monologue, out of the blackout, more rowing, more dialogue, another blackout, more interior monologue, and so on. This pattern continues, cyclically, several times over, maintaining a tension between Clyde's internal psychology and his existence in the external world, with Roberta, in the boat. Alongside this list, mostly in English, Eisenstein has written

Внутренний монолог [interior monologue]
Why not??!
Joyce in literature,
O'Neill in drama,
We in cinema!
In literature—good,
In drama—bad,
In cinema—best.[51]

At this climactic moment in the film's structure, Eisenstein pauses to experience an ecstatic moment himself: in the process of scriptwriting, it has become apparent to him once more that the specific features of the film medium—to the exclusion of all other media—are uniquely qualified to make effective the device of interior monologue. What, for example, James Joyce accomplishes, despite its excellence, can be executed only "within the cruel framework of literature's limitations."[52] It is even clearer from Eisenstein's dismissal of Eugene O'Neill that when theater attempts to use the interior monologue, the effect is absurd. Such aphoristic marginalia reverberates with Eisenstein's later statements on interior monologue in "Help Yourself!": "The camera slid 'inside' Clyde, it began to fix aurally and visually the feverish *train of thought*, alternating with the external action—the boat, the girl sitting opposite him, his own actions. . . . Even literature is almost powerless in this respect. It is limited either to the primitive rhetoric of Dreiser's

account of Clyde's inner babblings or to the even worse falsehood of the pseudo-classical tirades of O'Neill's heroes, who conduct secondary monologues in 'asides' revealing 'what they are thinking' (*Strange Interlude*)."[53]

The cinema's superiority as a domain for the interior monologue hinges on its capacity for an audio track to run in tandem with the visual image: to present a face and to juxtapose that image with the sound of its inner speech. And not just that, but to use the full arsenal of cinema technique to enforce this view of subjectivity: a rhythmic sequence of action, dialogue, a blackout, an interior monologue, the subjective view coalesces, more action, and so on. Now we can recall the hand-drawn image of Roberta with which we began this chapter. Her dark figure is suspended over the inky water, thrust between two sets of directions: "Pause—fade out," and then "fade in." Between these inky out and in points is the domain of the interior monologue.

Eisenstein's description of the camera's movement *into the character*—that the camera penetrates the boundary of Clyde's body in order to fix his thoughts—is a bit of technical synesthesia, and not an unconscious one. It is at this moment of collision between audio and video, between subjective and objective, that the tools of filmmaking appear to have punctured through previous limitations of representation, radicalizing the sensorium.[54] Through several pages of *An American Tragedy*'s screenplay, Clyde's aural interior monologue plays perpendicularly to the image—this monologue is built from a convoluted series of phonic associations, articulated thoughts, and emotional expressions that are juxtaposed with the hero's far less expressive face and movements, all blended with a soundtrack, which, as we saw earlier, is governed by a poignant set of diegetic sounds.

The murder scene begins with the writer-director explicitly hushing the environment in which the action will take place:

> The water on the lake is calm and dark.
>
> "What peace, what tranquility"—says Roberta.
>
> Rowing, then stopping, Clyde listens to this silence, looks about him. There is no one around.[55]

This silence is vital to the construction of the scene, establishing from the top an empty space in which the play of Clyde's inner struggle can occur. This struggle first takes the form of two distinct, opposed voices, each vying to influence his action. "As the boat glides into the darkness of the lake, so Clyde glides into the darkness of his thoughts. Two voices

struggle within him—one: 'Kill—kill!' the echo of his dark resolve, the frantic cry of all his hopes of Sondra and society; the other: 'Don't—don't kill!' the expression of his weakness and his fears, of his sadness for Roberta and his shame before her."[56]

As Clyde is torn between these two voices, it becomes clear that for the interior monologue, a multiplicity of voices is a key feature, and not merely a symptom of Clyde's fractured state. The two voices bifurcate and alienate the integrity of Clyde's thoughts, and his psychology grows diffuse, merging indiscriminately with the objective world as the scene progresses. The contending vocal presences similarly dissolve and immerse themselves in the environment as they "ripple in the waves that lap from the oars against the boat; they whisper in the beating of his heart; they comment, underscoring, on the memories and alarums that pass through his mind."[57]

Several pages earlier in the script, when Clyde, quite accidentally, happens on the thought that killing Roberta might be a solution to his problems, this homicidal internal voice makes its first appearance. Alone in his room, Clyde comes across an item in his newspaper that details an accidental drowning in a distant lake. As he sits down in exhaustion, he hears a disembodied voice for the first time, a whisper that plants the idea: "And what if Roberta and you—"[58] Clyde tries to get away from the thought, but it grows stronger, urging him for the first time, "KILL!" His mind is already distressed from the difficulty of his situation, and this new, violent voice quickly causes him to devolve into a sort of temporary madness that grows as a symphony of audio rises on the soundtrack, a symphony that clearly recalls John Sutter's symphony of madness. One sound transmutes into another, a whisper becomes the whistle of a storm, movement in the street becomes a streetcar, horns, a crowd, all of them rising into a chanted unison of "Kill! Kill!" The sounds and the voices swirl in a crescendo, and "at the climax of this symphony of madness," Eisenstein has Clyde abruptly run to a telephone booth, call Roberta, and make plans for the trip during which he will murder her. The ingredients for what will become his later interior monologue have been established.

Dreiser, likewise, had made his Clyde's mind "a region . . . peopled by creatures other than himself" and employs the device of a bifurcated mental conversation within the character, between his better half and "the genie of his darkest and weakest side."[59] But, whereas in the novel, this inner genie speaks in long, articulate paragraphs, detailing a plan of how to execute the murder, for Eisenstein, the descent into violent

interior monologue had to take the form of a linguistic regression. Clyde's inner voice is no sophisticated interlocutor, like Dreiser's genie, but something much closer to the "dynamic, shifting, unstable thing, fluttering between word and thought," by which Vygotsky characterizes inner speech.[60] This inner voice manifests in Eisenstein's screenplay as a primal pulsation, enacting the sort of interpenetration between character and environment that he admired in Zola.[61] After its suggestive half-sentence in its initial appearance ("And what if Roberta and you—"), the voice never develops beyond the primal, guttural command "Kill!" and is only ever countered by its opposite, "Don't kill!"

The terse commands that the screenplay plants in Clyde's mind are meant to return, then, throughout the murder scene, the voices ascending on the soundtrack as they "shudder," "possess him," "preoccupy him," "rise and torment him." The interior monologue builds into an "orchestra" of audio cues on the soundtrack, one propulsive run-on sentence in the script: the refrain of "Kill—kill" is joined by artifacts from Clyde's memory, along with random verbal suggestions that arise from naturally occurring sounds in the environment. The remembered voice of Clyde's mother, "Baby boy—baby boy," the incessant sounds of the waves, the "bird's voice" again (the booming cry of a distant waterbird), the rowboat oars slapping on the surface—and all this suddenly culminating in a moment of unexpected tenderness as Clyde's inner "Don't kill!" voice triumphs. Clyde, altered by this movement of thought, and now engulfed in silence, sits gazing in despair and exhaustion at Roberta's innocent face and realizes that he cares for her too much to hurt her. At the equivalent moment in the novel, Clyde sits in extended mute indecision, having entered into a sort of powerless trance from which Roberta tries to rouse him.[62]

This is the brilliance of Eisenstein's device: the very trick of interior monologue, its juxtaposition of dissociated sound and image, looms up as a sort of fate. And this fate forces Clyde's homicidal plan to fruition, despite his decision against it. The innocent Roberta, sitting opposite Clyde in the rowboat, is so disturbed by the appearance of his face as he experiences this internal struggle that she takes action and initiates a sequence of physical confusions. She first attempts to console the miserable man, but he recoils, jumping up and accidentally hitting her with his camera.[63] She falls backward into the prow, he apologizes and attempts to help her, but she has now grown frightened of him, terrified of the expression on his face. One might say that specifically because Roberta has not been privy to the audio track—Clyde's

interior monologue—her life is placed in peril. Both Clyde and the film audience have experienced this audiovisual device, and for those who have seen and heard it, the moment has been drained of its murderous tension. But for Roberta, barred access to Clyde's thoughts and watching him experience the anxieties of the interior monologue but with no access to its contents, the experience is all too uncanny. She reels back from Clyde and—unlike the event in Dreiser's novel—Roberta *herself* causes the boat to capsize. She "tries to get up, loses her balance, and the boat oversets."[64] Both characters plunge into the lake, and even when Clyde emerges from the water and makes a movement to try to save her, she shrinks from him, "terrified by his face," makes a piercing cry that echoes the waterbird's, and sinks irretrievably down into the water.

In Clyde, Eisenstein's performance of the interior monologue operates also as an internal dialectic, the "kill" thesis countered by its antithesis, "don't kill." The resulting synthesis is that Clyde does not kill Roberta, and yet she dies by his hand. The guilt for the murder moves metaphorically from action to intention while the thematic stakes of the work are heightened: Clyde is no longer just wrestling with his own greed but, as in a true tragedy, with forces of fate (chance, cosmic destiny, or social determinism) that appear to be beyond his control. The murder scene is also, crucially, about the power of thought, subjectivity, and the senses (and their implication for the cinema) as Roberta is left mortally alone in her own separate, silent diegetic space.

The tragic formal irony of the murder scene Eisenstein had envisioned demonstrates just how vital sound technology was for his orientation of Dreiser's material. The planned audio track, with the enhanced sophistication of its montage possibilities, has become the guarantor of the imagined film's ideological current. Viewers observe the inescapable outcomes of advanced capitalism's oppressive structures (in the guise of fate) just as they are inscribed in the audiovisual mechanism of cinema. The disjuncture between thoughts and actions then not only conclusively ensnares Clyde, halting his movement upward through class strata, crushing his potential, it also—because of who, in the end, must hear and who must not hear—fixes him in the role of murderer and Roberta in the role of victim. The audience, of course, would have heard it all—sympathizing with the pathos of Clyde's inner drama and being terrified by Roberta's relative deafness.

Dialectic of the Objective and Subjective

The complex though ultimately unrealized vision of adaptation in Eisenstein's *American Tragedy* was the creation of a film that, as we have seen, might have been akin to a Zola novel: a set of richly drawn characters enmeshed in narrative fabric in which the subjective and objective intermingle. The formula for this was to bring the objective realism of Dreiser into collision with techniques of subjectivity that the director saw himself inheriting from Joyce. Eisenstein read in the Dreiser novel a totalizing and thorough verisimilitude "as broad and boundless as the Hudson and as immense as life itself."[65] Dreiser's text was full of functional dramatic and ideological potential, a treasury of realistic, socioeconomically sensitive content waiting to be organized by the proper method and orientation. On the other hand, the compositional power of Joyce's "subtle poisons," the protean protoverbal streams and dynamic interior monologues—which appear montage-like in their assembly—suggested themselves perfectly as models for Eisenstein's own oblique internalized soundtracks.[66] Joyce's value for Eisenstein's film is strictly in technique; as the director would later claim, although he had achieved an unparalleled power of expressive technique in his work, Joyce was inevitably too naïve about the "social phenomena which outgrow consciousness."[67] A Dreiserian canvas and paints, then—material of American society of the early twentieth century—galvanized by Joycean technique. Eisenstein's carefully deployed application of the cinematic interior monologue may be seen as yet another in a long sequence of montage techniques, in this case a collision and dialectic of the objective and the subjective.

Eisenstein's conception of the sound film—how the acoustic must operate obliquely to the visual, with an emphasis on the dialectical product of the collision of these two independent orders of sensation—imagines a cinema that is both more sensually and more intellectually potent than the silent cinema it replaced. The theoretical program that dominated Eisenstein's work on *Glass House* and *Capital*, the development of the intellectual cinema (the montage of unambiguous theses or slogans), is not set aside here but rather applied to an unexpected aspect of the formal apparatus, in which heavily inflected units of sound and image are arranged to produce a sensual dynamic with a capacity for both pathos and ideology. In his 1943 reminiscence of his work on the interior monologue, Eisenstein emphasizes that the device was "the next step toward the 'theory of intellectual cinema'" and that,

crucially, the device allowed for a depiction of psychological interiority that could be achieved "without compromising the realism of the work." The film image moves with no need for narrative description of phenomena; without any impressionism of form, they are always already present—with some degree of objectivity—in the frame. Against this realism, the subjective audio of interior monologue collides, producing a sensation that represents a contact point for the objective and the subjective, an elemental "complex-sensual" structure that is "the only method by which the viewer can be completely enveloped and captured."[68] Eisenstein, following Marx, thus seems poised to demonstrate the inseverable bond between the objective and subjective, through the concept that all thought and ideas have their origin in the world of sensation. In the imaginary sound cinema of Eisenstein, it is not enough for the film to communicate the content of these thoughts, but rather the viewer must be placed in the position of the onscreen thinker, in an undeniably existing empirical world, while being buffeted by the distortions of interiority. The viewer must *feel* what it is to have such thoughts.

The adaptations of Dreiser and Cendrars are distinct within Eisenstein's body of work: the chronological and operational efficiency with which they were prepared, the formal specificity of their screenplay materials, and the lack of ambiguity in their plots all serve to make these two unrealized films coherent and integrated in a way that the majority of Eisenstein's other unrealized projects (including even those that entered the production phase) are not. In some practical sense, this makes the imagination of their finished form more possible. Ivor Montagu, who remained in the West after Eisenstein and his companions returned to Russia, claimed superlatively that the effect of the films (the adaptations of Dreiser and Cendrars), had they been made, would have accelerated "the subsequent development of cinema . . . by a decade."[69]

Eisenstein, meanwhile, was focused on ensuring that his experiments with the audiovisual, and in particular his approach to the depiction of consciousness in the American film projects, would be seen as properly dialectical—and he frequently insisted on the realism inherent in their cinematic function. The labor he invested in *Sutter's Gold* and *An American Tragedy* was accomplished under the assumption that the films would follow him back to the Soviet Union once they were made. They were not to be seen as works of escapism created to indulge values of Hollywood capitalism, they were not to be indicators of supposed wavering loyalties, but were rather intended to be inseparable

from the revolutionary work that he had done before leaving the Soviet Union and that he imagined himself continuing upon his return.[70] And the content of these Hollywood films, one may readily imagine, would not have been too difficult to justify in front of a domestic critical base or censorship committee—as both films chronicle the cruelty of the capitalist system, with *Sutter's Gold* focused on its rampant and wild perils and *An American Tragedy* on its dogmatism and rigidity. Alas, the imagined form of the films, as I have suggested, would have been, and likely were, more difficult to justify. Indeed, as Eisenstein would soon come to recognize, in Stalin's Russia, socialist realist style was coming to dominate the aesthetic rhetoric of the nation's creative arts and the arbitration of reality through any form of contingency, framed dialectically or otherwise, became impossible. After returning to Russia, Eisenstein could do little with *Sutter's Gold* and *An American Tragedy* and the innovations of form and technique he discovered during his work on them. One must imagine instead the director in his apartment, refining the ideas with pen and paper, hopefully composing for an unknown audience an essay or lecture that would communicate something of the invisible excitement of his discoveries.

Part III

Sequence/ Simultaneity

In 1932, Eisenstein returned to Moscow from a two-and-a-half-year sojourn in Western Europe, the United States and Mexico. It had been a period of profound frustration, marked by glimmers of potential and possibility that only ever culminated in disappointment and proscription. The director's failure to bring back to the Soviet Union a completed film from his time in the West was personally devastating and had the potential to become calamitous professionally. What had he been doing for these two-and-a-half years, and where were his allegiances after all this time in bourgeois society? Indeed, accusations of disloyalty and degeneracy trailed Eisenstein upon his homecoming, and he recognized the necessity of urgently throwing himself into his next projects in the hopes of demonstrating both the continued vitality of his filmmaking abilities and the irreproachability of his political orientation.[1] And yet, despite these intentions, the work that emerged from this initial period of reentry earned little for Eisenstein in either regard.

As had been the case in the previous years, the projects to which he devoted his energy would remain unrealized fascinating cinematic visions that never progressed beyond their complex, paperbound stages. Both films that Eisenstein developed at this time were set in the city of Moscow, and both demonstrated an intense interest in the

relationship between cinema and history—how to make the duration of historical chronology perform in a cinematic time-space. For about one year, between the summer of 1932 and the summer of 1933, the director would pursue specters of Russian history and contemporaneity to engage one fundamental question: how can the complexities of the Russian past be reconciled with its revolutionary present? Eisenstein would explore this dilemma in two completely different tonalities, in markedly different genres, and with two divergent approaches to preproduction form.

The first of the projects in question is *MMM*, an extraordinary and satirical envisioning of Russia's feudal past and its socialist present—it addresses the (in)commensurability of these social structures in the context of a slapstick time-travel comedy in which one era is literally confronted by another. The second project, *Moscow*, was to be a vast but elliptical historical epic developed in response to a general Communist Party call for artworks devoted to the nation's capital. In it, Eisenstein attempts to create a biography of the heroic Soviet city by showing it through a sequence of cleverly linked historical epochs, forging eight hundred years of national and municipal history into one temporal continuity. In both films the persistent task was to contrast, visually, the distance of divergent temporalities with the possibility of their momentary intersection. Though the concept was complex, and though Eisenstein was still not entirely sure how it ought to operate, it was a problem Eisenstein had been studying already for some time.

The Striped Blanket

In December 1930, Eisenstein left California for Mexico, where he would spend the next fourteen months and experience what was undoubtedly the most pivotal aesthetic crisis of his life. With Grigori Alexandrov and Eduard Tisse, Eisenstein moved from region to region, shooting episodes for a new film that aspired to be no less than a "multifaceted and polysemous image of the national, historical, natural unity of the country."[2] This Mexican project, like the ones that I have analyzed in previous chapters, would, for several practical and financial reasons, remain incomplete. Yet, unlike the unrealized films that make up the main objects of study for this book, it is less an example of imaginary cinema than it is one of an unexecuted cinema. With the Mexican project, Eisenstein, kept from actual production for so long, was finally able to shoot reel after reel of new, actual cinema material—some forty

hours' worth of original footage, putting his ideas into celluloid on a scale he had never done before.[3] And although, tragically, the director would never have the opportunity to view much of what he had filmed, let alone edit it, its footage and a number of unauthorized edits of it have long been available for viewing and analysis. And yet the Mexican project's importance in the canon of his imagined and unrealized projects cannot be overstated.

Much later, in 1943, Eisenstein would recall his filmmaking endeavors in Mexico as the ecstasy and trauma that "turned everything upside down" for him.[4] On a technical level, the Mexican project represents the methodological culmination of many of the questions of film theory and practice that he had been pursuing.[5] But on a more personal level, Mexico emerges, in this reverie, as the place where his cinematic explorations of consciousness and its relationship to reality crystallized. He describes his entry into Mexico as into a landscape where his inner world seemed to have been manifest in the already existing surroundings, "a reality . . . something like a projection from within of all the tendencies and interests that have wandered and still wander about within me."[6] In this new environment, Eisenstein connected with something vital, a life force that was both personal and familiar, as a sense of himself externalized in the environment—the subjective meeting the objective, language that is unmistakably in tune with the artistic goals on which he had so recently been focused in his Hollywood projects. But Eisenstein also retrospectively framed Mexico as a place of death: not only in its inspiration of the compelling death and dying imagery he produced for various passages of his film (which included funeral processions, violent bullfights, *hacendados* trampling *peons* under their horses' hooves, death confronted with irony in the Day of the Dead festival) but also—and perhaps most important—in the form of the mortal trauma of the inevitable "death of a beloved child, into which had been poured so much love, labor, and inspiration"—that is, the death of the Mexican opus itself, whose contents would never be viewed in the way he had imagined.[7]

One of many fascinating documents preserved from Eisenstein's work in Mexico is an eight-page treatment, most likely made within the first month of the project's duration and titled "Rough Outline of the Mexican Picture." The director lays out here, in exuberant English handwriting, the basic theme of the film: "The unity of death and life. The passing of one and the birth of the next one. The eternal circle."[8] This concept of unity, emerging from the integration of contrasting

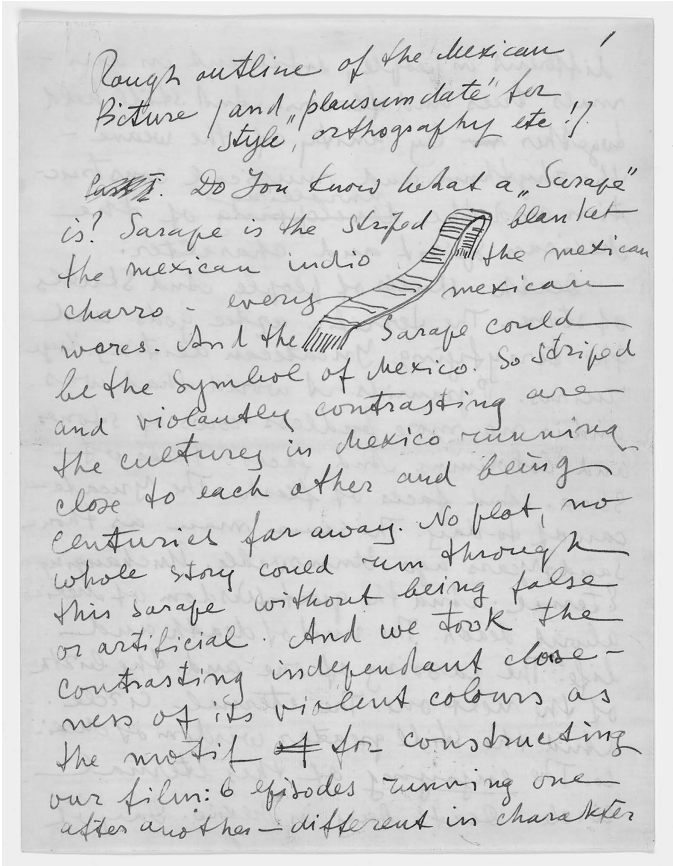

Rough outline of the Mexican
Picture / and "plausum date" for
style, orthography etc !/
Last !. Do You know what a "Sarape"
is? Sarape is the striped blanket
the mexican indio the mexican
charro - every mexican
wores. And the Sarape could
be the symbol of Mexico. So striped
and violently contrasting are
the cultures in Mexico running
close to each other and being
centuries far away. No plot, no
whole story could run through
this sarape without being false
or artificial. And we took the
contrasting independant close-
ness of its violent colours as
the motif for construeting
our film: 6 episodes running one
after another - different in character

Figure 9.1. The sarape in Eisenstein's plans for his Mexican film. Eisenstein, [A.16], 1. MoMA Archives, New York. Used with permission.

states of being (and nonbeing), is at the heart of Eisenstein's Mexican project and would become a major concern for the director over the remaining years of his life. But it was not only the film's exploration of unity for its existential repercussions that interested Eisenstein, but also the spatial and temporal implications of this kind of unity-focused worldview. In the treatment, he distills these concerns into an operative image: the "striped blanket," or sarape, that he saw worn, shawl- or poncho-like, by many of the people he encountered. The sarape is the symbol of both Eisenstein's Mexico and of his Mexican film: "So striped and violently contrasting are the cultures in Mexico running close to each other and being centuries far away. No plot, no whole story could run through this sarape without being false or artificial. And we took

the contrasting independent closeness of its violent colors as the motif for constructing our film."[9]

Enjambed within the manuscript text of these explanations, Eisenstein has drawn a sarape that effectively communicates his concept—striated, extended, fringed at both ends, but also highly suggestive of a strip of celluloid with lateral frame intervals ready to be entered into an edited sequence. Eisenstein had, effectively, transformed the ethnographic object into an emblem of montage cinema.

Particularly interesting in Eisenstein's description of Mexico is his structural diagnosis of its domestic cultures, "close to each other" (spatially) and yet "centuries far away" (temporally), the correspondence of the national region to the development of its social structure. In imitation of this correspondence, the film was to have consisted of six independent episodes with a prologue and epilogue, each of which was to have been set in a different region of the country and each representing a different stage in cultural development—"different in character, different in people, different in animals, trees, and flowers."[10] The arrangement of these varied sections, their sequential linkage, was to have been the dynamic fulcrum of the film's narrative composition, and (like the sarape) the "differently colored" sections were to have been held together by a unifying "weave" of musical themes and rhythmic shot composition. The form of the sarape, "contrasting independent closeness," as Eisenstein calls it, as reflected in both the film's composition and in Mexico itself, becomes a deep formula and an appropriate expression of the director's varied approach to montage. We see a complex sequence of independent pieces, while also seeing their simultaneous coexistence—an elusive opposition that was supremely attractive to Eisenstein.

The sense that he was formally equipped to explore this sort of composition of contrasting times and spaces in Mexico seems to follow directly from Eisenstein's recent work with the possibilities of audiovisual cinema in Hollywood. In the Mexico treatment, music plays the vital role of organizing and aligning the successive sections into a synthesized whole. In previous chapters, we have seen that, since he had first begun considering his approach to the sound film, Eisenstein had been led to think about a montage that could occur on multiple axes. And with his development of the implementation of audio in his Hollywood scripts, the director continued to employ audio in a constant perpendicular relation to the sequential frames of a film montage—sound in counterpoint to image, the audio working out a

vertical reciprocity with the image's horizontal unfolding. Beyond the new semantic complexity that this gives the sound film (specifically, new possibilities for the expression of interiority as seen in the interior monologue), it also provides a perpetual sequence of conceptual simultaneities, convergences of multiple orders of sensation—the possibility for a multiplicity of impressions or thoughts to occur in one and the same moment.

Such a passion for cinema's ability to suggest the infinity and simultaneity of the single moment was directly related to Eisenstein's appreciation of James Joyce's innovations in representing time and space in prose, something he found endlessly relevant for cinema. As Annette Michelson has convincingly demonstrated, one of Eisenstein's key discoveries upon reading *Ulysses* was a "freedom from sequentiality."[11] What impressed was that the writer had demonstrated the narrative power of "instead of following a line, [expanding] in every dimension (including that of time) about a single point."[12] These lines, points, and dimensions were also at the heart of Eisenstein's most chimerical (unrealized) project, the creation of a spherical book that would allow the reader to encounter all its parts in their "simultaneous and mutual interpenetration" (see chapter 2 of this book).[13]

In the later 1930s, Eisenstein would articulate many of these ideas in his unpublished theoretical work *Montage*, developing the ideas of a "horizontal montage" and a "vertical montage" and the potentials of their synthesis.[14] Among the essays that make up *Montage*, the director drafted a section that considers such intersecting axes, and the flux between one axis and another possible in certain forms of art. Memorably, he compares cinema montage to a reclining person who is free to assume "a vertical position and stands firmly on both legs."[15] In essence, this figure represents a movement from horizontal sequentiality to vertical simultaneity. The opposition is clarified throughout the essay through examples that refer to poetry and music: poetry, the director argues, citing Lessing's treatise *Laocoön*, is a form that must unfold in temporal sequence and can only *suggest* the effect of simultaneity, whereas music, with the luxury of its melody (sequential) and harmony/polyphony (simultaneous), can do both. And, while music might be imagined limited by its absence of material or plastic form, the sound cinema, having assimilated the relevant qualities of music in its audio track and having combined audio with its own intrinsically abundant visual material, *can* exploit the values of actual sequentiality and simultaneity.[16]

All Five Eras at Once!

What basic form operates in Eisenstein's conception of the sound film was meant to be applied as the principle guiding the arrangement of specific content related to the different regions and temporalities of Mexico. In her work on *¡Que viva México!*, Masha Salazkina specifies this organizational principle as a "structure [that] depends on the coexistence—and the conflict—of both, the archaic and the ultramodern (i.e., the technological advances and revolutionary political ideology)" and "the co-presence of an authentic past and a revolutionary present, which seem to mutually interpenetrate each other."[17] Time and temporality—their representation, manipulation, and, important to note, their potential for dialectical conflict were, in fact, conceptual preoccupations of Eisenstein's since the writing of *The General Line*. One of the basic organizational concepts of that film too was the framing of divergent historical temporalities within one location—specifically, in that case, the stark meeting between persistent archaic forms of village life and the revolutionary reality of contemporary, technology-motivated agricultural practice.

In *The General Line*, this montage of conflicting phases of development could be seen as the film director's figurative response to Lenin's well-known periodization of Russia's socioeconomic history into five stages with five corresponding social structures (patriarchal, mercantile production, private capitalism, state capitalism, and socialism), something the leader expounded in essays such as 1918's "'Left-Wing' Childishness and the Petty Bourgeois Mentality" and 1921's "The Tax in Kind (The Significance of the New Policy and Its Conditions)."[18] Lenin's formulation of these ideas in the latter essay was employed as justification for the Soviet Union's movement toward the New Economic Policy—he argues that Russia was host to various socioeconomic formations (a so-called *mnogoukladnost'*) and that the temporary practicality of introducing state capitalism (the fourth stage) would ensure and speed along the Soviet Union's full transition into socialism (the fifth stage). While working on composing the screenplay for *The General Line* in 1926, Eisenstein published an essay, a somewhat breathless call for collectivization, titled "Five Eras" in *Pravda*. In the essay, Eisenstein demonstrates familiarity with Lenin's assessment of Russia as a site of the intermingling of multiple types of socioeconomic structure, but the director is clearly less thrilled by Lenin's emphasis on the imminent unified "transition" out of these archaic structures (i.e., that

mnogoukladnost' must be overcome) than he was by the fact and the possibility of the conflict and combination of these seemingly incommensurable structures. As ever, Eisenstein is fascinated by the potential of complex and explosive coexistences, and we find him arguing for a kind of living montage, a simultaneity, of the social forms that at different times had structured Russian reality. So it is not merely the fact of the "stone age" eventually acceding to the "latest word in science and social organization (planned resettlement into state works, into communes, and so on)"—it is not the clean sequencing of these eras, but rather the meeting and uniting of "all five eras at once" that captures his attention.[19] No surprise that he developed these thoughts while writing *The General Line*: his original, more ambitious vision for the film was of a dialectically developing story web based on coexisting social structures, and not just the relatively simple juxtaposition of archaic, feudal peasant life with advanced socialist mechanization that it wound up being. Eisenstein's energetic call for socioeconomic simultaneity in "Five Eras" is surrounded by anecdotal information on advancements in scientific hybridity in the Russian countryside: the combining of breeds of swine, experiments with grain, new methods for soil husbandry.

The essay itself reads as a paean to such hybridity in general and acts as both a preview and a tangible instantiation of his interest in the interpenetration of archaic humanity (primal forms of thought, irrational social structures) with the advanced development of the modern person (higher cognitive forms of thought, rational social structures). For Eisenstein, such development over time is never an issue of linear evolution by which a superior form merely replaces another, but rather a constant state of dialectical conversion by which new forms are produced in collision with old. So too with Eisenstein's careful combinations of times: he juxtaposes the archaic form with the modern in his narrative compositions specifically to produce a new hybrid knowledge, a historical synthesis that may move the system further. In the attempt to allow varied successive social forms (and the "eras" that they represent) to exist concurrently, to interpenetrate, Eisenstein was pursuing the dialectical framework of a new type of montage—the collision of different temporalities, the montage of *times*.

Clearly this interest in a forced collision between perceived sequences and simultaneities persists in Eisenstein's Mexican project, in its imagined sarape structure, the matriarchy of Tehuantepec existing concurrently and somewhat contiguously (on the map, in the film) with the Spanish colonial structures on display in Merida, for example. In a diary

entry of 1932, Eisenstein finds another source of this line of thinking in his *Capital* project: he recalls his "peculiar form of conceptualizing economic evolution, not as a staircase of historically reconstructed sequences, but as a fan of differing eras existing *side by side*" and then connects it directly to when, in 1930, he sets off "to shoot not *Capital*, but *Viva Mexico!*, where Mexico is taken namely as a simultaneous coexistence—spatially . . . of different sequential eras."[20] That cinema might approach history as a duration collapsed, as one thoroughly present instant, had profound implications for the director's approach to the possible in cinema and for his understanding of dialectical approaches to history; he would explore its implications as an underlying concept and an organizational principle for the remainder of his working career.

There Is No Time

When, on 9 May 1932, Eisenstein returned to Moscow from Mexico via New York, he brought with him masses of luggage—mostly cases of books—but no film to show for all the work he had done abroad. Nevertheless, he carried significant momentum, and the excitement that had grown from these formal discoveries in Mexico—and he believed that these discoveries would be applicable to the Soviet Union and its film-viewing public. Not long after their return, Eisenstein and Alexandrov wrote to Joseph Stalin, asking for an audience: "We would like it if you would consider it a possibility to receive us and if there is time, for us to inform you on the topic. The film that we have made holds international interest from which it is important to extract the maximal political and economic effect for the Soviet Union." Stalin did not answer the letter; it is marked with the general secretary's decree, "I cannot receive them. There is no time."[21]

The lack of response from Stalin was one of many signals that the Soviet Union to which Eisenstein had returned was one that had dramatically altered since his departure: the country was enduring the concluding months of the First Five-Year Plan, its enforcement of collectivization and antireligious crusades growing brutal; many repressive campaigns had been initiated against literary and artistic fellow travelers; Vladimir Mayakovsky had fallen quickly from favor and subsequently committed suicide; Stalin's wife had died under mysterious circumstances; and in 1929–30 Stalin initiated his first truly deadly purges, for example, against Red Army officers who had previously served in the imperial army. Inevitably, this change in the political

reality of the country meant that the films produced there would need to change as well. Formal experimentation in the arts, already a troublesome quality in the mid- and late 1920s, had by now become analogous to degeneracy. The independent Soviet creative unions were all being dissolved, and creative workers, whether from the fields of music, architecture, literature, or cinema, were being organized into centralized state-run labor collectives.

Within the Soviet filmmaking apparatus, careful control from above had become the norm. The entirety of cinematic production had been consolidated under the supervision of one central body (Soiuzkino), whose newly appointed executive director, Boris Shumiatsky, was adamant about moving the national film industry away from the avant-garde tendencies for which Soviet film had been celebrated abroad during the 1920s and toward the production of "mass fiction films" that would implement sound technology: high-quality pictures with the appeal of popular entertainment, films that could compete on the domestic market with Western successes.[22] Shumiatsky's book-length policy statement, *Cinema for the Millions* (1935) would eventually articulate this turn toward the production of popular films from a specific set of genres; prominent among several others (films for children, the Komsomol, socialist reconstruction in agriculture and industry) were the historical-revolutionary film and the comedy.[23]

As he engaged with the last two of these generic categories—first with the comedy in *MMM* and then with the historical-revolutionary film in *Moscow*—it was Eisenstein's enthusiasm for his discoveries made in Mexico, and his desire to apply them cinematically to the Soviet Union's struggle to move fully into a new era, that was his obvious theoretical and aesthetic motivation. His earlier essay on the "Five Eras" is evidence that it was the Soviet Union (and Russia in particular) that had initially spurred his thoughts on the possibility of multiple temporalities coexisting in one space—ideas that he nourished abroad but which he experienced as persistent.[24] Eisenstein's dialectical, collision-focused approach to historical time would become the method for these unexpected experiments in genre. Both projects, and the documents that survive from the process of their imagination, embody Eisenstein's restless and idealistic quest for new film forms to suit ever more complex concepts; in both projects, new possibilities for representation and new methods of expression blossom promisingly before they shudder suddenly and vanish.

Chapter 6

MMM

> It is natural to expect that such a strong tendency toward the transformation of stable forms into active forms would not be restricted to formal elements but would carry over into subject and theme as well. The hero of a film becomes a pliable character, i.e., the kind of character for whom mutability is . . . natural. Mutability of form now becomes less of a paradoxical expression. . . . [H]ere God himself has commanded the character to be fluid.
>
> —Sergei Eisenstein, *Disney*, 6 October 1940

In the summer of 1932, Eisenstein began to devise and write a screenplay for a comedic satire of contemporary Soviet life. He gave it the strange and somewhat baffling title of *MMM*. This was the context: Eisenstein, Russia's most internationally recognized cinema figure, had only just returned to Moscow after a frustrating three-year journey through Europe, the United States, and Mexico, during which time he had begun and failed to complete multiple major film projects. The director was now eager to turn to a domestic theme and, like other prominent Soviet filmmakers of the early 1930s, chose to pursue the production of a comedy. The film he envisioned was to have been the tale of the title character, Maxim Maximovich Maxim, a midlevel Soviet bureaucrat who, through a series of strange occurrences, finds himself the hapless arbiter of mismatched historical forces, compelled to manage medieval visitors who have magically appeared in present-day Moscow. *MMM*—the development of its concept, the composition of its screenplay materials, its initial castings and test shootings—occupied Eisenstein for the better part of the next year, until the spring of 1933, when, just as the enigmatic project was to advance from preproduction to principal photography, having been given full approval from above, he abruptly and quietly abandoned it.

In English-language biographies and surveys of the Soviet filmmaker and his work, this 1932–33 endeavor appears more or less parenthetically, certain broad strokes glimmering here and there, usually a few sentences or paragraphs—and those sometimes marred by inaccurate paraphrasing of the plot's concerns.[1] Beyond them, secondary information is limited, and direct engagement with the original text is scanter still. Russian-language scholarship has hardly been more thorough: when *MMM* appears in early Eisenstein surveys, such as those written by Vsevolod Vishnevsky and Viktor Shklovsky, it is as a glancing mention.[2] Later Soviet film critics likewise held the work at a distance. A rare exception, Rostislav Iurenev, devotes almost five pages to something approaching a substantive analysis in his 1988 study of Eisenstein's oeuvre, but he does so only to denounce *MMM*, labeling it "minor," "unsuccessful," even "tasteless."[3] More recently, Aleksandr Kozintsev has addressed certain of *MMM*'s fundamental conceits in an excellent 2012 article on Eisenstein and his theory of the comedic.[4] But the lone notable publication devoted to *MMM*—in any language—is the 1977 composite edition of Eisenstein's literary script for the film in the annual *Iz istorii kino*, printed there in conjunction with a brief postscript by Manana Andronikova and a reminiscence by Eisenstein collaborator Sergei Yutkevich.[5]

Moreover, Eisenstein himself, who made a frequent practice of analyzing previous works in his theoretical writings, almost never mentions *MMM*. One meager allusion comes in his 1935 essay "Bolsheviks Do Laugh (Thoughts on Soviet Comedy)," in which he writes, simply, "A few years ago, I worked on the screenplay for a comedy." This light reminiscence is followed by thoughts on his general tendency to become so obsessed with research that principles take precedence over their creative application. He concludes that this "is what happened with the comedy. . . . Perhaps it was not for me to make a Soviet comedy."[6] The director implies here that his commitment to the comedic film was fleeting—that it was just a passing means of exploring theoretical thoughts *on* comedy. Undoubtedly, Eisenstein scholarship has reflected this verdict, especially when the project's critical handling is considered against the attention drawn by several other unrealized Eisenstein films.

From a distance, this set of circumstances creates an impression of *MMM* as an underdeveloped idea meriting only cursory notice. The archive, however, gives a different impression. Eisenstein left behind a stunning amount of textual and visual material on the project: two

different screenplay treatments; six drafts of a full literary scenario; four drafts of a director's script; multiple edit lists; extensive handwritten notes; the director's drawings for characters, costumes, and sets. The material totals well over two thousand pages, and it documents the careful development of an idea and its movement, through various stages, toward execution.[7] These documents affirm *MMM*'s place alongside the most formally experimental and ideologically risky work Eisenstein ever produced. Far from a historical trifle, the traces of *MMM* emerge as a crucial opportunity to increase our understanding of both the filmmaker and Soviet cinema at a transitional moment.

The Funniest Thing . . .

From his work in theater and his earliest essays, it is clear that Eisenstein had devoted serious thought to the comedic, and that filming a Soviet comedy had been an aspiration of his for some time.[8] Indeed, questions of the comedic and its dialectical function had come to occupy a place in Eisenstein's unpublished writings through the 1920s and would continue to engage him in his later projects, the theoretical undertakings of the 1930s and 1940s.[9] Thus, the chance to jump immediately into production in mid-1932, and counteract mounting insinuations against him and his inactivity, also had self-evident and intrinsic personal value—making a comedy clearly set off theoretical and creative sparks.

Eisenstein's interest in comedy, of course, is inseparable from the emphasis placed by the Soviet film industry leadership in the early 1930s on lighthearted genre films oriented toward the mass viewer. The focus on comedy, in particular, was part of a general discursive shift that would crystallize in the mid-1930s in Stalin's triumphal and oft-quoted statement that "life has become better . . . life has become more cheerful." The role of organized laughter and levity, and their potential to motivate and clarify within this purported improvement in Soviet daily life, should not be underestimated. And, in fact, 1932 had seen a marked proliferation of comedies developed by major directors for production—filmmakers such as Abram Room and the ex-FEKS duo Leonid Trauberg and Grigori Kozintsev were starting to work on comedies, Aleksandr Medvedkin was establishing a distinct comic voice with his short agit-satires and would soon develop his first full feature, *Happiness* (1934). Most notably, Grigori Alexandrov's musical comedy *Jolly Fellows* (1932–34) quickly became the paragon of the broad comedic

category: it was lighthearted, with positive, socialist narratives, and it was more or less free of any challenging formal devices.[10] By some reports, Eisenstein was the first director to whom Boris Shumiatsky had offered the direction of the *Jolly Fellows* project; when Eisenstein turned it down, it went to his protégé, Alexandrov.[11] Eisenstein was convinced that if he were to direct a comedy, it would have to be one that allowed him to work according to his own method and engage the cinematic problems he had pursued in his previous works, and so, rather than take up a studio script or adapt existing material, he chose to propose a concept that was entirely of his own imagining. With *MMM*, what interested Eisenstein was the opportunity to make a careful exercise in genre—not merely a comedy that filled Western models with socialist material but something thoroughly revolutionary in form *and* content.[12]

To this end, he published a brief item in the journal *Sovetskoe iskusstvo* on 9 July 1932, "The Funniest Thing." In this article, after claiming that "the resolution of the problem of revolutionary laughter is a task of the same importance as the resolution of the problem of revolutionary pathos," Eisenstein expresses his practical desire to direct a screen comedy and, without giving details about its theme or content, proposes a short list of imagined collaborators (camera operator Eduard Tisse, scriptwriter Viktor Shklovsky, dialogue by Nikolai Erdman and starring Maxim Shtraukh, Iudif' Glizer, Alexandra Khokhlova, and others).[13] Though Eisenstein would not actually succeed in assembling this particular pantheon of Soviet film talent for the comedy, the wish list, along with the theoretical assertions that precede it, demonstrate the rigor with which he intended to enter the field of comedy—and his inclusion of the actor Shtraukh in the list is particularly meaningful.

Maxim Maximovich Shtraukh's name is primarily remembered for two important, if difficult to reconcile, triumphs of acting. First, for his back-to-back eccentric performances as Pobedonosikov and Prisypkin, the satirical central characters, respectively, in Vsevolod Meyerhold's 1930 landmark productions of Vladimir Mayakovsky's *Bathhouse* and *The Bedbug*.[14] He is remembered, second, for his subtle and realistic performances as V. I. Lenin in several films from the 1930s and 1940s.[15] Long before this, Shtraukh considered himself a confidant and disciple of Eisenstein—almost all Shtraukh's earlier activities in theater and film were tightly connected with Eisenstein, the avant-garde, and the so-called eccentric style of acting. The two had met as boys in a dacha village outside Riga, where the families of both boys spent their

summers. As young men, the two joined the Moscow Proletkult theater together, Eisenstein as a set designer and Shtraukh as an actor.[16] When Eisenstein began directing plays, Shtraukh was a core member of his troupe, appearing in the historically notable and convention-challenging productions of *The Wiseman* (1923), *Are You Listening, Moscow?* (1923), and *Gasmasks* (1924); when Eisenstein directed his first short film, *Glumov's Diary* (1923), Shtraukh's role in it was his first appearance on film as well. The collaboration was followed by additional film roles for Shtraukh in *Strike* (as the police spy "Bulldog") and in *The General Line* (in a small role as a peasant farmer). Shtraukh also served as an assistant to Eisenstein on the sets of *Battleship Potemkin*, *October*, and *The General Line*; his primary responsibility as assistant was casting—and specifically casting featured extras for their physical type (*tipazh*).[17] Eisenstein's working intimacy with Shtraukh was reflected in his personal life as well: in 1920, the two began to share a room in the Shtraukh family apartment at Chistye Prudy 23 in Moscow.[18]

As it happens, several years earlier Eisenstein had begun developing plans with Shtraukh for a film comedy in which *MMM*'s genesis may be found: 1928's concept for a satire of the era of the New Economic Policy featuring a Soviet entrepreneur-speculator and his picaresque rise and fall. And, while this project, which was intended to be the first "buffo comedy" of Soviet cinema and was provisionally titled *MM Buys and Sells* (*MM torguet*), resulted in only a few scattered notebook pages, they represent compelling and typical evidence of Eisenstein's imaginary cinema: scribbled ideas strewn with ecstatic commentary, intermittent theoretical notes, a series of sketches that illustrate essential qualities of the envisioned film's characters. Also apparent in the sketches are several ridiculous set pieces in which the central character, MM—to be played by Shtraukh—exploits the contingencies of Soviet socioeconomic reality for his own gain.[19] One scheme presents the hero renting out small children to commuters, affording them the right to stand in the forward part of the streetcar.[20] Another shows the industrious MM scaling a streetlamp and rerouting its gas to both illuminate and heat food for a family dinner scene below.[21]

Although Eisenstein and Shtraukh approached the project in full earnestness—Eisenstein to direct and Shtraukh to play MM (Shtraukh even grew a beard in preparation for the shoot, something that Eisenstein insisted he keep even after Shtraukh had been asked to shave by the producers of another film in which he was currently performing), the project was ultimately shelved.[22] And yet it was to this bundle of

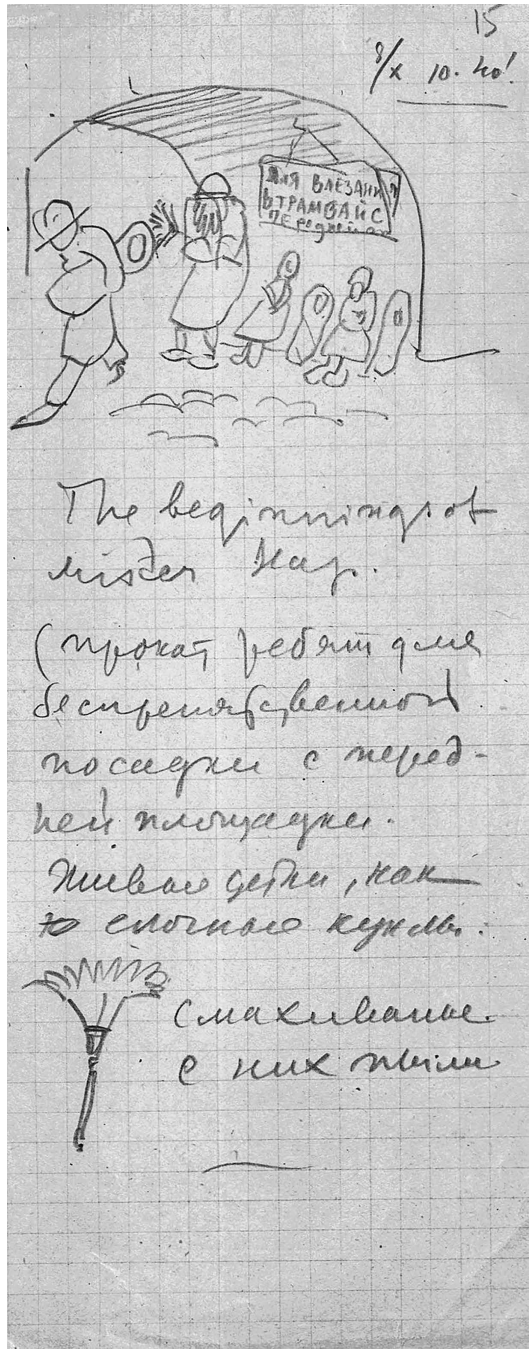


Figure 10.1. Two sketches for *MM Buys and Sells*. RGALI 1923-2-163, 12, 15. Used with permission.

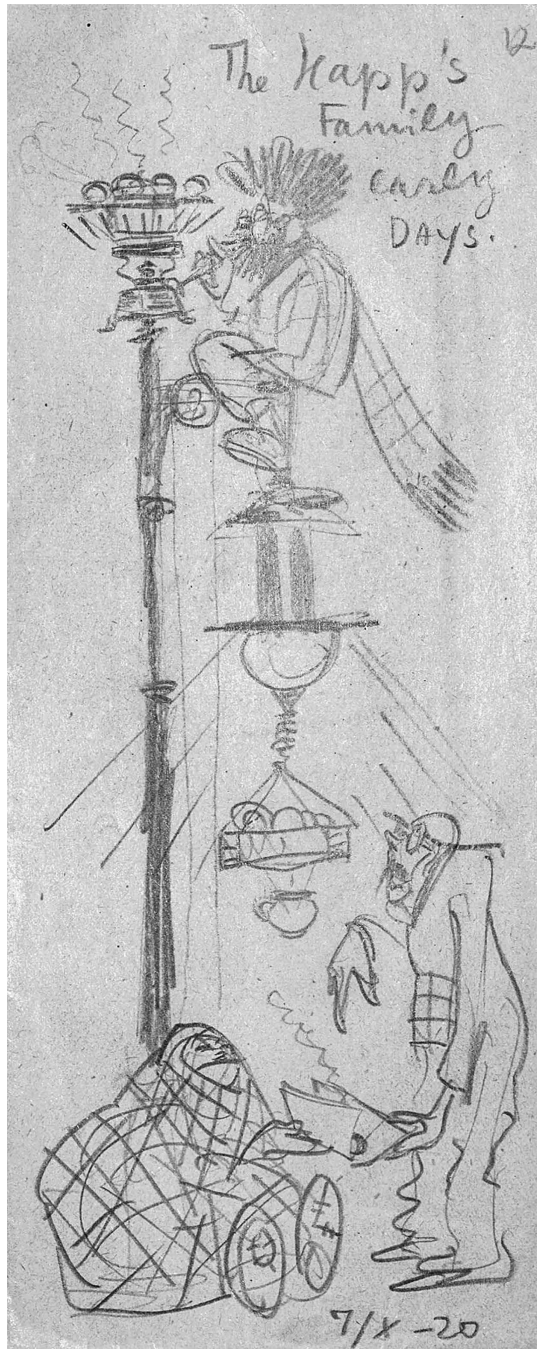


Figure 10.1. (Continued)

potential material—and to its central character—that Eisenstein returned four years later when developing his new comedic hero.

A Tall Tale Told in Clumsy Verse

In preparation for composing his new comedy film, Eisenstein put together a set of materials related to his emerging ideas. In this group of documents, preserved in the archive, are articles, clippings, theater reviews, and even some book-length works. Perhaps in response to Shumiatsky's call for a lighter, more approachable Soviet cinema, Eisenstein seems to have paid close attention to what was playing on the stage in Moscow at the time, and particularly to the so-called lesser forms. Indeed, included in this portfolio, among scattered feuilletons and clippings of satirical essays and drawings, are both an article from *Vecherniaia Moskva* called "What's New on the Comedy Front?" and publications such as *Lesser Dramatic Forms—Estrada* (1932) that examine the form of *estrada*, a categorization analogous to that of variety theater in the West.[23] These publications interrogate the place of such lower or lesser theatrical forms—popular song and dance, circus, clowning, illusion, spoken word, parody, and so on—within the new Soviet reality, preserving a rhetorical space for their continued existence while also raising the ideological bar for participation. Eisenstein's interest in these materials not only represents the breadth of his intellectual ambition with his comedy, it also reaffirms that he intended a carefully crafted exercise in genre that would require a supremely delicate touch in its ideological contents.

Perhaps to this end, Eisenstein collected another set of materials with a very specific focus: under a title sheet on which he has scrawled "*Boyar* plays in Moscow, 13 October 32" is an edition from 26 September 1932 of *Programs of Plays, Concerts, and Spectacles*, Moscow's comprehensive theatrical program listing.[24] On the fifteen or so pages of this paper, Eisenstein has highlighted every production listed as currently playing in Moscow that has any relation to ancient or medieval Russia, to the time of the *boyarstvo: The Tale of Tsar Saltan* at the Bolshoi Theatre, *The Tsar's Bride* at the Bolshoi Filial, *The Baptism of Rus'* at the Satire Theatre, *The Death of Ivan the Terrible* at MKhAT 2, and both *The Golden Cockerel* and *Boris Godunov* at the Stanislavsky Opera Theatre. This research into the repertoire of Moscow theaters demonstrates the prevalence of this sort of historical material on the contemporary stage—and to Eisenstein it seems to have become an opportunity to explore a subject

matter rich in philosophical possibility. Medieval times seems to have offered a safe space in which to explore themes both contemporary and timeless; the period functioned as a cipher for addressing the specific present. Beyond this, at a time of intense administrative regulation of the arts, when the techniques of formalism had become nearly treasonous, the possibility for devices such as defamiliarization and deformation still had some purchase on the medieval topos. They were investigations that represent Eisenstein's earliest attempts in excavating deep Russian history for its metaphorical and dialectical collision with Soviet contemporaneity, the key relationship with time and history that would unite his work on *¡Que viva México!* with *MMM* and subsequent projects focused on the Russian medieval past, such as *Alexander Nevsky* and *Ivan the Terrible*.[25]

Parallel to his research, Eisenstein began devising the narrative that *MMM* would follow. Several drafts were developed before the director arrived at a more or less authoritative story in the literary scenarios dated January–March 1933.[26] In these versions, a prologue introduces the most relevant piece of connective tissue between *MMM* and its predecessor, *MM Buys and Sells*: the central character Maxim Maximovich. As in the 1928 notes, here too Maxim is an upwardly mobile self-starter with a funny name. In the case of *MMM*, the humor comes from the automatic repetition of his tripartite name, Maxim Maximovich Maxim (in some versions Maximov, in some places written in the French style, "Maxime"). The prologue establishes Maxim as an obsequious and fickle bureaucrat of inflated responsibility: the director of a local Intourist office.[27] After a busy night spent entertaining a mute foreign guest (named, preposterously, "Kanitfershtan," perhaps a phonemic play on German), Maxim stumbles through the city, quite drunk, and finds himself inside a church. There, full of "philistine enthusiasm," he looks around at the frescoes and icons and raises an insolent, pseudorevolutionary fist.[28] The scene takes on an uncanny power as "by candlelight he repeats Don Juan's challenge to the statue of the commodore, calling on all of ancient Rus'" to make itself useful and come down from the cathedral walls to join the local *profsoiuz*, or worker's union.[29] This challenge becomes an even more explicit engagement with Pushkin's 1830 *The Stone Guest* and its hero's unintended animation of a static image when, after a pause, in ominous response, one of the frescoes—an Orthodox patriarch—slowly bends its head and nods to accept the challenge. "I will come down," it intones. Maxim bolts home immediately, terrified, safely retreating to his wife and bed. Or so he

thinks. The next morning, he is awoken by a delegation of figures from ancient Rus', now having truly descended from their church frescoes and crowded into his apartment: the same patriarch, several *boyars* and *bogatyrs*, an executioner, a falconer, *gusli* players, and so on. The visitors quickly transform his bedroom into a rollicking medieval banquet hall, and a series of comic hijinks ensues, climaxing as Maxim's marital bed transforms into a *troika* that gallops through the window into snowy expanses of countryside à la finale of *Dead Souls*.[30] Eventually this scene too dissipates—in a camera dissolve—to Maxim's face buried in his bedsheets. It has all been a dream. He wakes up—again—in relief, and the film's prologue goes dark.

But the script's major diegetic trick occurs after the prologue's dream sequence, in the first act proper, as Maxim returns to the office of the tourist agency to find his waiting room full of the same *boyars*, *bogatyrs*, and the patriarch. While the medieval visitors had been gallivanting in Maxim's dreams, the *otkomkhoz* (Department of Communal Housing) had demolished the church into which they had long ago been painted—leaving ancient Rus' nowhere to turn for shelter but Intourist.[31] What does this refutation of the boundary between dream and waking life mean for Maxim's professional hospitality? How should he welcome these temporally and ideologically foreign guests? The rest of the script describes Maxim's misadventures with these ancient visitors as he attempts to manage their outmoded impulses for religion and commerce (which appear criminal and dangerous in newly Soviet Moscow) and mitigate his private egoism with abstracted feelings of political duty.

These negotiations play out in an extended series of potent incongruities as the plot progresses: the patriarch contriving a contemporary baptism of Rus', three *bogatyrs* squeezing into and eventually bursting a Moscow streetcar; a political reeducation prison from which two mythological "birds of paradise," Sirin and Alkonost, cast a sleeping spell to free their medieval companions; priests and palace guards eschewing their vestments to take part in *fizkul'tura* exercises with *gusli* players strumming in accompaniment; an attempt by the executioner to perform a beheading at Red Square's *lobnoe mesto* (place of execution) now crowded with tourists, et cetera. A series of love triangles are developed, first between Maxim, his wife Ida, and the secretary Mura—and then between Maxim, Mura, and a handsome medieval falconer. The ramshackle plot culminates in a highly orchestrated battle outside a remote and frozen monastery (the reeducation prison just mentioned) between

the Moscow police and the visitors from medieval Russia, graphically presaging in its arrangement and snowy setting the battle sequences of Eisenstein's 1938 *Alexander Nevsky*. In the end, Maxim's confused allegiances—whether he ought to serve the romantic past or participate in the revolutionary present—leave him petrified. He is saved only when he finally wakes from yet another layer of dream.

The telling of this plot in the *MMM* literary scenario is preceded by six pages of front matter that set up the lens through which Eisenstein wanted the readers of his screenplay to understand its intentions. A title page appends two subheadings to the initials *MMM*. The first warns of the script's unconventional formal structure, "A Trilogy of Three Two-Part Comedic [Sections] with a Prologue (Seven Parts)." The binary form of each section of the three-act structure proposes a struggle between formally oppositional ideas: "reality or dream," for example, and "love or duty." The second subheading alerts the reader to another formal feature ahead, that it is "A Tall Tale Told in Clumsy Verse" ("*Nebylitsa v litsakh neskladnymi stikhami*").[32] And, indeed, all seven sections of the script that follow are written in singsongy, sometimes-rhyming verse; exceedingly short lines that veer in and out of meter and rhyme as they run from scene to scene.[33] The lines that Eisenstein prefers are mostly short, broken phrases that punctuate the script in a continual series of brief, staccato images and ideas, establishing a crisp, motile rhythm that carries the script briskly from scene to scene. One of the many possible ways of reading Eisenstein's idiosyncratic decision to compose the screenplay in verse is as Oksana Bulgakowa does, that "this was the only literary form that resembled montage."[34] Whether it was the only appropriate literary form or not—Eisenstein himself had written on the montage quality of Japanese haiku, for example—it is clear that these free verses suited his single-minded focus on montage as the dominant factor of film language. The short pulses of textual information, each ruled by a noun or a verb, can often double for self-evident individual shots or frames, each ruled by a new object, action, or angle. The collision of these lines, one with the other, then, can be read as producing the same sort of synthetic thought that film montage was meant to. The first lines of the screenplay demonstrate how this might work:

An empty office	*Pustaia kontora*
Empty "Intourist"	*Pustoi "Inturist"*
Everyone is out skiing	*Ushli vse na lyzhakh*

On a ski run.	*Na lyzhnyi probeg*
The deputy	*I zamzav*
And the accountant	*I bukhgalter*
And the tour guides,	*I iddy*
Male and female.	*I gidki*
The *enfilade* stands empty.	*Pustuet anfilada.*
But at the front door	*No u paradnogo kryltsa*
There's a ring.	*Zvonok.*
A man is ringing.	*Zvonit chelovek.*
The man—is the new chief.	*Chelovek—novyi zav.*[35]

A montage list could be easily derived from this set of verses: a shot of an empty office, a shot of the Intourist sign, cut to two wide exterior shots of office workers skiing, a series of close-ups of specific office workers, cut back to the empty hall of the office, then the sound of ringing cuts in, a shot of the front door, a shot of the man (perhaps from behind) ringing the bell, a full shot of the man—Maksim Maksimovich. Here, the language of the verses is economical and sharp, ready to be translated into cinematic analogues; there may still be space for interpretation, but the general visual intention is straightforward.

This, however, is not all that Eisenstein does with his verses. Almost immediately after this introduction of Maxim, he begins experimenting with the literary possibilities that the form makes available. The next lines continue their description of the character:

He received his appointment	*Poluchil naznachenie*
And has come	*I prishel*
To take	*Zaniat'*
His position:	*Polozhenie:*
Directing the offices	*Upravliat' kontora*
Of Intourist	*Inturista*
In the little town of *N.*	*V gorodishke N.*

The clear parallel between individual lines of verse and individual shots has already fallen to pieces on the first full page of the script. What Eisenstein presents here are not montage units; the lines do not even suggest filmable information. Instead, it is a kind of literary backstory to the character—where he is coming from and what his plan is. Moreover, the continual breaking up of the verse shows a sustained rhythm that no longer has anything to do with the potential rhythm of

montage edits but is instead determined by basic linguistic units. Here, as throughout the script, the potential of the literary form seems to overwhelm the cinematic demands of traditional prose-based literary scriptwriting.

And so, a strangely literary absurdism is established from the title page of this cinema document—a screenplay written in verse, a carefully fragmented structure, the unmistakable tone of knowing authorial playfulness. The mood continues into the list of dramatis personae that follows. Here, Eisenstein offers Maxim Maximovich Shtraukh as the film's star, in the role of Max. As had been the case with the 1928 collaboration (*MM Buys and Sells*), this central character is written with Shtraukh's given name and patronymic, Maxim Maximovich, establishing a diegetic reciprocity between the actor and the character that he was meant to play. Likewise, Shtraukh's actual wife Iudif' (Ida) Glizer was to play the part of MMM's wife, also named Iudif' and Ida.

After the title page and character list, the author includes a document called an introduction (*Vvedenie*). Its presentation as a true prolegomenon for those about to read the screenplay allows the author to explicitly state the ideological substance of both the work and the genre it represents and to obviate the need for the reader to work these issues out in the process of reading. We see in this that Eisenstein's experiment in genre and comedy was permeated with caution. And the care he takes suggests a suspicion that his reading audience—in this case, Soviet film production management and censorship committees—might mistake his intentions. The last several projects (both completed and unrealized) had been chronically questioned and misunderstood both in the West and at home; the value of such a guiding statement must have seemed self-evident at the beginning stages of this new endeavor. Thus, the introduction document is both an interpretive lens and an ideological insurance to impute best motives to the author. It is divided into two sections, one under the heading "An Explanatory Note" and the other "Ideological Content." The first is an opportunity to develop a theoretical context for the comedic script as a form; the second makes an ideological justification for the story material. The thrust of each is more or less to more carefully guide the imagination of the reader, to show them *how* to read the screenplay.

The "Explanatory Note" begins with an aphorism: "A comedic filmscript is nothing more than a schema of buried landmines that will become on-screen bursts of laughter and is not comic literature in and of itself."[36] Like his mid-1920s writing on the montage of attractions,

Eisenstein's metaphor here is spatial and dynamic—encouraging his reader to imagine the screenplay as a topographical ground carefully prepared for the passage of both character and reader through it. The conditional nature of screenplays, ever contingent on their incarnation, is paramount here. In 1929, in his essay "The Form of the Script," Eisenstein had written that a filmscript must be "essentially a future audience's anticipated story of the film (or picture) that has captivated it." There, as he does here, the director establishes a functional division and taut interplay between the antecedent literary nature of the screenwriter's task and the strictly cinematic nature of the director's task in translating word to screen (producing its "optical embodiment").[37] In *MMM*'s introduction text, the dynamic by which the cinematic emerges from the literary is described by means of the particular dilemmas of comedic screenwriting. Eisenstein emphasizes the impossibility of forcing the features of one system (the literary) into the other (the cinematic), saying, "Just as it is impossible to lay out a three-dimensional body on a flat surface, it is likewise impossible to describe on paper the entirety of comedic manifestation that has been planned for the screen, without making it flat as well."[38] The expressive law of comedy, he argues, is that anecdotes must be *told*, caricatures must be *drawn*, and likewise comedic films must be played out *on screen*.

Eisenstein develops this idea by proposing two "peculiar projections" to be used as the basis for judging the comedic filmscript (in the same way one might judge a three-dimensional figure based on a sketch of two planar projections)—that is, its "ideological thesis," visible beneath the web of its comic situations, and "the schema" according to which its genre characteristics and plot action correspond to this basic thesis. Thus, although the comedic screenplay (like any screenplay) remains fundamentally incomplete and separate from the comedic film it prefigures, it is still possible to judge what the script *projects* of that finished film. Through this formula, Eisenstein establishes a means by which ideological content can be transmitted via the formal, generic features of the comedic script. And though it supposes a conceptual disjuncture between form and content, the director's formula is oriented ultimately to the eventual fusing of the two by the time the work reaches the cinema—as it becomes "living action" integrated and organized by a cinematic organicity, "the one [ideological content] flowing through the other [formal structure], both embodied as one."[39] In one of the working drafts for the introduction, Eisenstein writes that it is

exactly at this moment of living conjunction "that laughter should be expected."[40] In other words, the moment of the transformative union of form and ideological content is also the moment when the comedic becomes fully cinematic.

Having suggested a provisional means of separating this comedic form from its thematic material, Eisenstein moves to the section "Ideological Content," in which he states that the fundamental idea of the *MMM* screenplay is party loyalty—*partiinost'*—and the proper orientation of worldview and ideology to the social class that the party represents. Here he uses party loyalty as a basic theme from which to show the variety of generic forms that could be developed for a film, which depends on its compositional arrangement. For example, a dramatic approach might be to reveal party disloyalty in a character: if done superficially it takes the form of melodrama; if done with subtlety it might be a great tragedy. But if one wants to stage a comedic interpretation of the same theme, the stakes are different. And here Eisenstein takes the opportunity to set out the dramatic situation of his comedy: "that ridiculous situation when a hopelessly non-party philistine—through a sudden coincidence of circumstances—finds himself in charge of a highly sensitive task. And in the course of twenty-four hours, he manages to perform all manner of thinkable and unthinkable absurdities that are the product of his petit-bourgeois background."[41]

This is the basis for Maxim Maximovich, Eisenstein maintains, but it is also, he says, what binds him to such figures of Russian and world literature as Gogol's Chichikov, Molière's *bourgeois gentilhomme*, and Mark Twain's *Connecticut Yankee*. The tropes of misplaced authority and mistaken identity that allowed the creators of these comic figures to skewer certain absurdities of their sociopolitical milieux were to be the tools for Eisenstein's Soviet satire.

Eisenstein's prefatory statement of comedic method is compelling not just for its insistence on the segmented nature of comedic form and the cinematic process more broadly, but also because it allows him space for significative pivoting. The screenplay is produced with specific form, specific content, but it awaits the moment of its own cinefication in "living action" before its ideological impulse can be fully felt. With this groundwork laid and the onus for flexibility of mind and imagination placed firmly on the reader of the script, Eisenstein concludes the introduction and moves to the script proper, the major events of which I have related earlier.

Is This Reality or a Dream?

In early versions of the *MMM* script, as the dramatic conflict between the medieval time-travelers and the Moscow police reaches its breaking point, everything onscreen swirls and suddenly bursts—the whole of the diegetic space vanishes and Maxim, having failed to fit the two divergent worlds together, finds himself alone against a white field. Tears stream down his exhausted face and he sighs, "This whole story, it seems, did not take place." Flailing for purchase, he shouts: "What was that? A dream? Or reality?" In response, a title card was meant to appear on the screen: "We can safely say it was neither one nor the other."[42]

This proposed conclusion foregrounds one of the film's central thematic concerns: the dialectical shadow to be found in the concept of "the real" as defined against its negation, "the unreal." From the imaginary to the subjective, oneiric, mistaken, and performed, that which is not real appears as the chaotic element of the narrative—the thing threatening to upset the stability of Maxim's philistine existence. Consider Max's initial vision of Rus' appearing at his bedside. This is a dream from which he awakens in pronounced cinematic fashion, only to find the ancient entourage awaiting him at work the next day. This first stuttering back and forth from dream to hard-to-reconcile reality prompts questions for the viewer: How is it that these archaic figures came to be here? What are the rules of their existence? Indeed, the film's reality is one that must also be pitted against the audience's expectation of the filmmaker's narrative device, advertised earlier in the text as a "tall tale." In other words, Maxim awakens from an absurd dream to a reality determined by emphatic authorial fictionalizing. Max's deduction at the end—that everything he has just experienced did not actually "happen" in any objective sense—guides the audience to the same conclusion. When he asks whether it has all been reality or a dream, to whom does he address the question? The screenplay is not explicit on the issue of Max's sightline: Does he look to the sky? Into the camera? Regardless, the medium intrudes at this final moment to obliterate the reality-dream binary. Like an act of God, the appearance of the title card (in a sound film!) "neither one nor the other" is a pronouncement both definitive and ambiguous. And more than anything else, as an instance of written text being given the final word over filmed image, it is a reminder of Eisenstein's own dialectical method.

This intervention of a synthesizing omniscient voice at the final moment reminds the viewer of the constructed nature of film narrative—and its essential affinity with the dream format. Just as Maxim awakens

from his dream, the audience is meant to awaken from their cinematic dream, which now clearly operates as an aesthetic and rhetorical device. The sudden sense of authorial presence can be viewed as a metaphor for another kind of porousness embedded in the work's concept, the penetrable line between the reality of the film, its diegesis, and the reality of the filmmakers themselves. We have seen the literal relationship between M. M. Shtraukh and the character he was meant to play, MMM; in an even more explicit subversion of this relationship between the *creator* and the *created*, Sergei Eisenstein—the director himself—appears bodily in the script at key moments, commenting on the action. In fact, Eisenstein makes the compelling choice to list himself as the first character ("Writer and Director") in the film's cast list.[43]

At first, this detail seems to be a mistake—perhaps the filmmaker had meant to place his name above the standard line between crew and cast—but each draft bears the specific order out, and more than one of the drafts lists the first two roles of the film as separately numbered characters ("Writer" and "Director"), each to be played by an actor called "Sergei Eisenstein." This is a casting decision that will be literally fulfilled, at the culmination of the script's first act, as the plot reaches an impasse: the medieval visitors are touring a factory and the spinning wheels of the production machinery have suddenly seized up. As the figures stand still on the factory floor, the narrator observes how like chess pieces they are, and a sudden transformation takes place: reifying the metaphor, the cast physically metamorphoses into a chessboard and its pieces, their social and erotic alignments plotted out as moves within a game. And, just as the reader might wonder who it is orchestrating these now tangible narrative actions, the author himself appears and speaks some scripted dialogue to the audience:

And above the board	*I nad doskoiu*
Eisenstein	*Eizenshtein*
Plays against	*igraet v shakhmaty*
Himself	*s samim*
At chess.	*soboiu*.
"This situation has	*"My s etoi situatsiei*
Tied us up!"	*zashlis'!"*
"I'll tell you even more—	*"Skazhu vam bol'she—*
We're done for!"	*zavalilis'!"*
"But is there any way out?"	*"No gde zhe vykhod?"*
"Que can we *faire*?"	*"Fer to ke-s?"*[44]

Eisenstein, or the version of himself he has written, openly laments the dramatic impasse—and his brief excursion into wordplay (a travesty of French "*Que faire*" with Russian particles) reminds us that the basic tension in this chess game, between the two Eisensteins, is that between writer and director, between the one imagining the story in playful, unbounded text and the other burdened with the task of incarnating it in the material world; it is a self-conscious contest between the literary and the cinematic, a satire of the cinematic dilemma of making the imaginary real. The *MMM* shooting script calls for a camera setup in "The office of the director and screenwriter" with a chess table at which, "on either side, sit the AUTHOR and the DIRECTOR, pondering in torment the further moves of the game."[45] The filmmaker illustrates this confrontation between his two manifestations in a sketch included in his notes to the screenplay.

This choreographed appearance of Eisenstein within the action of his own film establishes a motif that will be repeated later in the script: the author in bifurcated personae, orchestrating a sudden deus ex machina to resolve the insoluble dilemma of a dramatic situation. In this case, some factory workers appear to repair the stalled turbine, which in turn stirs up a storm of steam and wind that washes the characters out the factory doors and on to further adventures.

For a filmmaker to employ such a technique is to proclaim the contingencies and arbitrariness of writing itself. The plot could have gone in any number of directions, but the author steps in and chooses one simultaneously convenient and accidental, and therefore rhetorically pointed. The artifice of filmmaking here develops in the same direction as the dream device it employs: ultimately both cinema and dream are tools to probe the conceptual limits of objective reality, or at least its mechanical representation. The climactic pronouncement that the film is neither reality nor dream suggests that what *MMM* has been, above this dichotomy, is a film. This general tendency toward self-reflexivity becomes definitively metacinematic in several important moments. Often, this impulse manifests in the materiality of film technique, in references to the formal methods and devices through which the story is being presented: the camera, the microphone, the creators. Even the material and motion of celluloid itself is made operative as it passes through the camera's chamber—at certain moments, the script calls for the frame to freeze and in others for the image to run backward.

A particularly meaningful—if grotesque—instance of metacinematic play occurs during a section of the script titled "Love and Duty."

As Maxim stands in his Intourist office, caught between vague party duty and a misdirected desire for romance with an evasive love interest, he becomes suddenly dumbfounded, almost feverish in his inability to take decisive action. He begins to drool and gasp for air, his lips growing pale.

And suddenly, by mistake,	*I vdrug skhvatil po nedosmotru*
He snatches in his lips	*Gubami*
The microphone	*Mikrofon*
And . . . swallows it.	*I . . . proglotil*
Along with his drool	*S sliuniami.*
And all around goes silent:	*Zamolklo vse vokrug:*
If there's no more microphone,	*Ne stalo mikrofona,*
There's no recording of sound.	*Net zapisi sobyt'iam zvukovym.*
We go with miming—into a silent film	*Mimicheski—v nemuiu*[46]

Maxim's physical dilemma is so acute that he bursts the membrane of diegetic reality and inadvertently interrupts the apparatus of the film's very production. The extreme language of the bodily (his pale lips, fever, drool) stands starkly against the mechanical object that it consumes. But this is more than just a momentary rupture of the illusion of filmic totality. By muting the outside world, carnalizing the still complicated silent/sound dichotomy, and directing the process of sound recording to the *inside* of Max's body, Eisenstein realizes the metaphor of "inner struggle"—and the audience is given the ability to see and hear what is going on *within* the body of the film's hero.

And suddenly: shooting. Fire and din.	*I vdrug strel'ba. Ogon' i grokhot.*
Director and mixer fly in from their booths.	*Letiat iz budki rezhisser i miksher.*
"Well, what's going on here?"	*"I v chem delo?"*
A title card:	*Nadpis':*
"What's going on??"	*"V chem??"*
Turns out the microphone is swallowed	*Okazalos'*
And the transmission	*Proglochen mikrofon, i peredacha*
Of external events has now turned inward,	*Sobytii vneshnykh pereshla vovnutr',*
To Maxim, into his soul.	*K Maksimu v dushu.*[47]

Again, director Eisenstein's staged confusion, in concert with that of his sound mixer, adds a comic element to the microphone dilemma. The incongruity of battle sounds resonating against the mute perplexity of these two cinema practitioners shatters the illusion of both sound and vision by separating the one from the other—and it forces the film again to use what should be an obsolete dialogue card in order to pose the filmmakers' question for them ("What's going on??"). Here, the

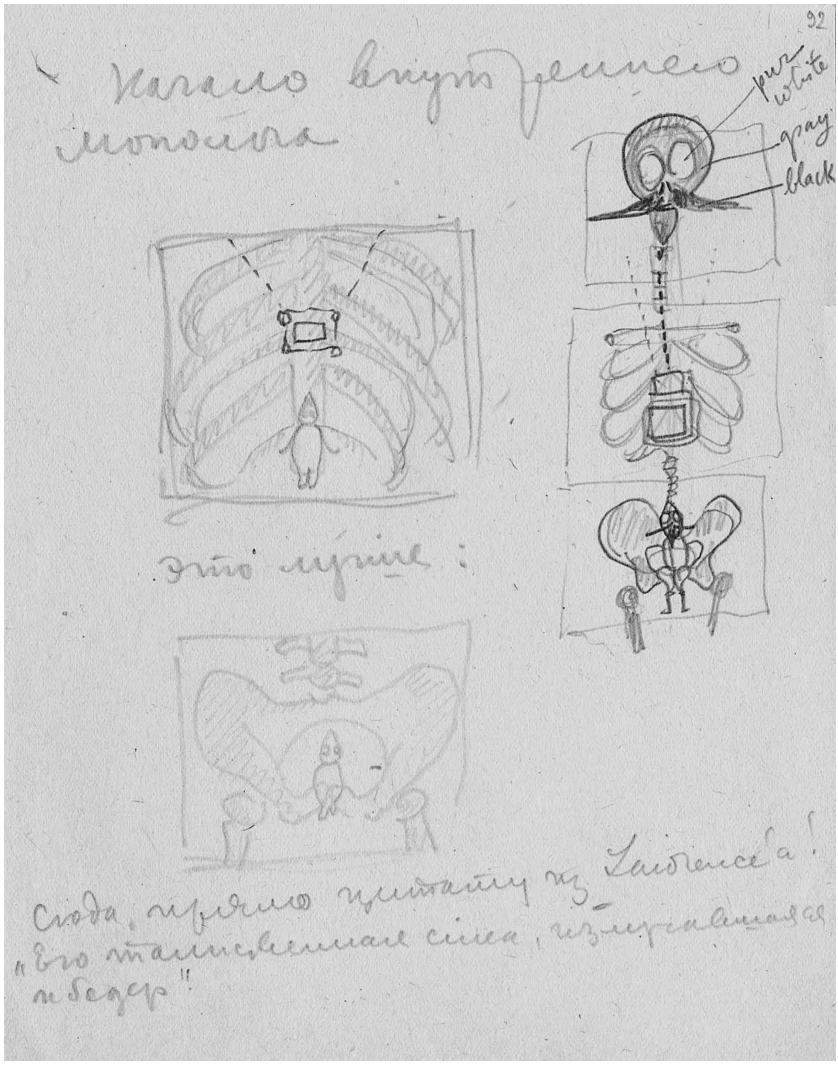


Figure 10.2. Maxim Maximovich's X-ray. RGALI 1923-2-185, 92. Used with permission.

director's shooting script calls for the scene to be filmed at "the border of the office suite and the film set."[48] It is across this liminal boundary that an X-ray machine is then wheeled in, and the director and sound mixer come running to fetch the microphone. The confusion in the studio is eased by the X-ray performed on Max's body, which adds an internal vision to the incarnated inner struggle. It makes the hero's form schematic; the boundaries of his body become an additional shooting space for the film. Sketches for this scene show Maxim's ribcage with a miniscule and fetal Max, perched on his own pelvis, speaking upward into the microphone dangling above.[49]

These overt metaprocesses are an unexpected but certain continuations of the exploration of the interior monologue that Eisenstein had developed in his English-language screenplays for *Sutter's Gold* and *An American Tragedy*. There, the conflict between the stony exterior faces of the heroes and the simultaneous audio (a collage of verbalized and abstracted cognition) was deployed in order to engage inner psychology; in *MMM*, the psychology is made literal not only on the territory of Max's body but also in the very voice of the film's creator.[50] Appearing far from omniscient in his faltering attempts at narrative logic, Eisenstein demonstrates the forking and contingent path of artistic processes. At the level of the screenplay, the writer-director's *own* interior creative monologue makes the audience privy to his concerns with the mechanics of filmmaking, his awareness of cinema-theoretical discourses, his anticipation of his likely detractors, and the tenuousness of the comedic script's political legibility, of narrative imagination hemmed in by ideological concerns.

Mutability Is Natural

Having ushered the viewer inside the title character's body and into the embattled thoughts of his own onscreen filmmaking persona, Eisenstein superlatively invokes the themes of mutability and transformation that dominate the project. The script's reader begins to sense an affinity of intention between the form and content of *MMM*: a tension between structural precision and the elastic mobility that comes of transgressing this structure. The script courts specificity, even rigidity of form, while simultaneously claiming the right to completely reject structural expectations; it is a script oriented to broad visual comedy that insists on the freedom to work its humor out on the page, indeed, the freedom to not be funny at all. Even the screenplay's persistent verse

form would inevitably have become irrelevant once the chaos of actual production began. This is all mirrored in the settings and characters of the film, caught as they are between formal specificities and seemingly impossible levels of fluidity and flexibility. Settings arise and recede suddenly, often without clear causality, making use of Moscow landmarks (Dynamo Stadium, Red Square) while simultaneously purporting to occur in "the little town of *N*."[51] The characters in their hyperarticulation begin to defy form: they disguise themselves with animal appendages and inanimate objects, they don each other's costumes, which themselves morph into props and pieces of scenery.

The revolt against inflexible form that can be read in Maxim's vivification of the static church frescoes is also the guiding principle in Eisenstein's *MMM* drawings—from the undulating lines delimiting the sleeves of one particular *boyar* to the beards that grow "out from under the very eyes" of the *gusli* players there is a constant sense of movement, overbrimming, and elasticity.[52] One remarkable drawn sequence of physical transformation features the ancient Orthodox patriarch, who sells spiritual gifts at the *kolkhoz* market in a booth that forms from the autonomously expanding fabric of his priestly headwear (*klobuk*), which autonomously stretches to cover the sales space and baptismal font within. As he conducts his business, the Red Army, in another part of the city, have defeated a group of *bogatyrs* at feats of physical strength—the army then gives a deafening shout of victory that sends a wind rushing throughout Moscow and into the market, where it billows into the patriarch's tent. Eisenstein imagines the transformation: the fabric of the headgear flutters and expands and then suddenly inflates like a balloon. The cleric's censor becomes a furnace, fueling the balloon with incense as it ascends skyward to drift over Moscow.[53] The patriarch has progressed materially from painting to living being, to a half-man half-tent, to a balloon that carries him out of the film entirely.

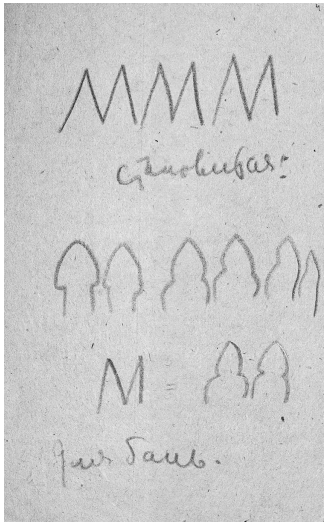
Not only the characters but also the very title, *MMM*, is mined for morphological potential. Throughout the pages of the script documents, the ternary initials take on almost talismanic value as they proliferate. In one note, Eisenstein proposes an ideogrammatic formula: the letters MMM become an architectural structure, a portico of some sort.[54] One M equals one of these shapes. And then, in drawings that follow, the reader may see the shape appear repeatedly and recognize it forming the iconostasis of the church where the plot is triggered, in the *enfilade* of the Intourist offices, and even as the arabesque archways of

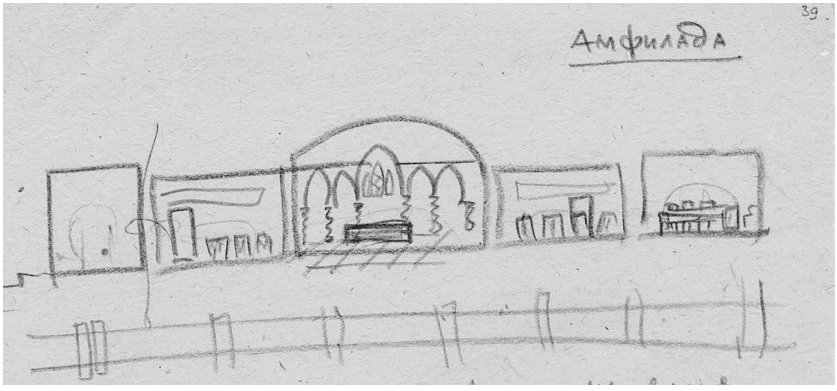
the bathhouse where Maxim appeared in an early draft of the opening scene.[55] The reader of the script can imagine the onscreen titles dissolving into a mimetically constructed soundstage, with the eponymous Max lounging alongside a leg of the archway, a compelling instance of the written text, the literary, mutating into a moving image, the cinematic.

The most pronounced figure of mutability in Eisenstein's project is, by far, Maxim himself. In the director's sketches, he is always round, barrel-chested, bald but for tufts of hair on each side, a three-point beard, and glasses. He is described as unctuous and obsequious to his medieval visitors; this is made metaphorical through his ability to change costume and disposition from scene to scene. At his most bureaucratic, his eyes are sharp behind beetling brows, and he stands in stiff riding breeches; but he quickly transforms into an egg-shaped buffoon with opaque saucer eyes, floral prints, and a body far too large for his head. He is variously drawn in the suit of a classic *chinovnik*, in traditional Russian peasant garb, a toga, pajamas, Constructivist-style workwear, a field marshal's uniform; at one point, he steals the costume of the medieval falconer. Even his facial hair is given a history and changes with the dramatic situation: one sketch is captioned "succession of mustache forms."[56] At a certain point, his mustache is to puncture his love interest's dress; at another, it plays the harp.[57] Maxim is also meant to adapt his form to those he is with: one drawing shows him consorting with a mythological birdwoman; a page later, he himself has sprouted feathers and wings and flies skyward.[58] As he moves through these transformations, his features proliferate beyond his own body. Surrounded by a crowd of figures, each in his characteristic glasses and mustache, he encounters himself as man, woman, even as animal.[59]

One observation from Eisenstein's later essay on the work of Walt Disney may help to illuminate this most prominent facet of *MMM*: "It is natural to expect that such a strong tendency toward the transformation of stable forms into active forms would not be restricted to formal elements but would carry over into subject and theme as well. The hero of a film becomes a pliable character, i.e., the kind of character for whom mutability is . . . natural. Mutability of form now becomes less of a paradoxical expression . . .: [H]ere God himself has commanded the character to be fluid."[60]

Eisenstein admired the way that Disney's motile creations moved from human qualities to animal, formed by and then rejecting the lines that contour them, moving from plot dilemma to plot resolution.





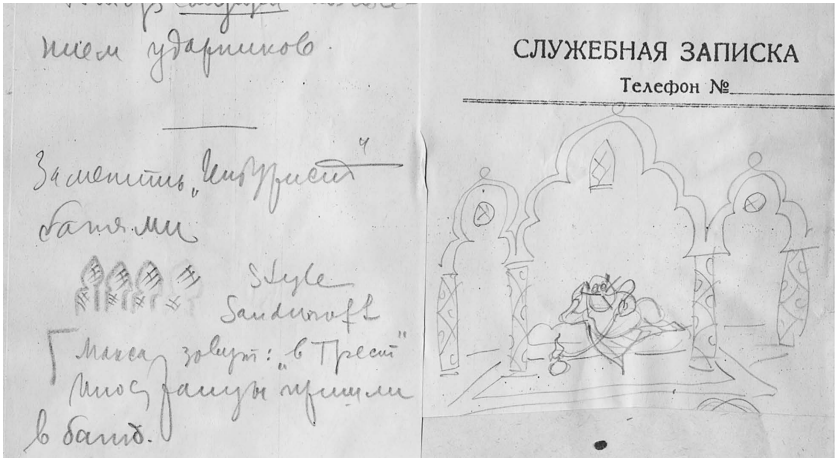


Figure 10.3. The letters MMM take on material forms. RGALI 1923-2-185, 4, 139, and 1923-2-188, 32. Used with permission.

About early Mickey Mouse, he writes, "His movements are a revolt against form, against fragmentation and conformity."[61] This is the ecstatic quality of the animated line, of a fully unfettered form. Indeed, as one considers the extent to which Eisenstein planned to transform the bodies and spaces of *MMM*, one may already see the influence of these early Disney cartoons, and the germ of the theory that he would express in his later essay. Granted, Eisenstein's drawings for his films always display a quality of strictly graphic movement—his drawings should be seen as no more prescriptive of how the filmed image should actually look than are the literary movements described in his scripts. The *MMM* materials and their deep impulse toward metamorphosis and complete freedom from form seems almost to suggest plans for an animated film. Indeed, one can't help wondering how Eisenstein could have hoped, practically, to film some of the moments his screenplay and drawings suggest.

But there is no question whether *MMM* was to be anything other than a live-action film, that it was to be acted by real actors, to be shot in real locations. To imagine how Eisenstein might have attempted to animate Maxim Maximovich's many mutations, we must consider how the director employed effects that approached techniques of animation in his other films—and not just in the optically daring plans for *Glass House*, for example, but also in the films he did actually realize. In *Strike*'s title cards, for example, Cyrillic letters suddenly transform from linguistic units into spinning cogs, and humans mutate into animals and back. In *The General Line*, processed-food pigs are made to pirouette while tractors assemble themselves from parts, parking themselves gently in stalls. In *Ivan the Terrible*, the tsar casts himself inky black and crooked as a forty-foot shadow onto a wall, a cosmic body manipulating the globe. For Eisenstein, the animation of rigid form could be accomplished plastically, through employments of light, shadow, depth, projection; it could be achieved through the camera with lens distortion, depth of focus, compression of space; and it could be done with montage's vivifying power and aided by techniques of cross-fading, superimposition, stop-motion. These instances encourage us to take Eisenstein at his word that the process of animation was always to be understood literally—that to animate is to endow with movement, to bestow life. That such a concern would find such an apotheosis in the comedy of Maxim Maximovich is also no surprise: for Eisenstein, mutability, when demonstrated literally, is inherently linked with the comical. In his Disney essay, he would later link the animation and

transformation of Disney's characters with the comic heroes of Ovid and Shakespeare where "the poetic principle of transfiguration operates comically . . . through literal metamorphosis. . . . This is animism at its highest stage . . . literal. And therefore comic."[62]

In their variety and motion, the *MMM* drawings demonstrate that, even at an early stage in the project, Eisenstein had already begun attempting to endow objects with life and transcend the constraints of formal, filmable reality. And the literal enactment of this sort of "animation"—especially on paper, when such "formal ecstasy" is most possible—gives the project its palpably comedic quality.[63]

As Eisenstein would later write in *Method*, this literalized morphology is what separates true pathos from its comedic reverse side: "pathos is the moment of the dynamic realization (the coming into being) of the dialectic of a phenomenon. The comedic is the formal application of the dialectical principle to a static instance."[64] We may be reminded here of Eisenstein's initial idea for Maxim Maximovich: the "nonparty philistine" operating in the semblance of extreme *partiinost'*. Elsewhere in his notes, Eisenstein describes the essence of the character as "the banality of petit-bourgeois enthusiasm and the pathos of petit-bourgeois banality, against the backdrop of the authentic pathos of our times."[65] This delicate interplay of the very similar concepts of pathos and enthusiasm shows Eisenstein's deep interest in the aesthetic and philosophic implications of their difference: shoddy enthusiasm can be manufactured to banal ends by class derelicts, and there is real pathos (of a tragic quality) to be found in the banality that supports this manufacture. But the truly authentic movement of the epoch, the march toward socialism, is associated strictly with authentic pathos. Thus, Maxim's mutability becomes Eisenstein's comedic principle: a feigned and funny dialectic, a perpetually shifting form, which, for all its formal dynamism, must be seen as fundamentally static.

One series of studies of Maxim in various poses stands out as particularly poignant in its demonstration of this understanding of the comedic and its relationship to Disney's animation. The lines produce convincing living motion that demonstrates the character's integral specificity through a series of circumstances. Here, Max stands sheepishly, equivocating, an arm behind his back; there he tiptoes stealthily, ready for the sky to crash down on him; now he floats grumpily on his back, looking over his shoulder; finally he expresses in profile a snobbish disdain for something out of frame.[66] More than once in his later writings, Eisenstein paraphrased a passage from Friedrich Engels's

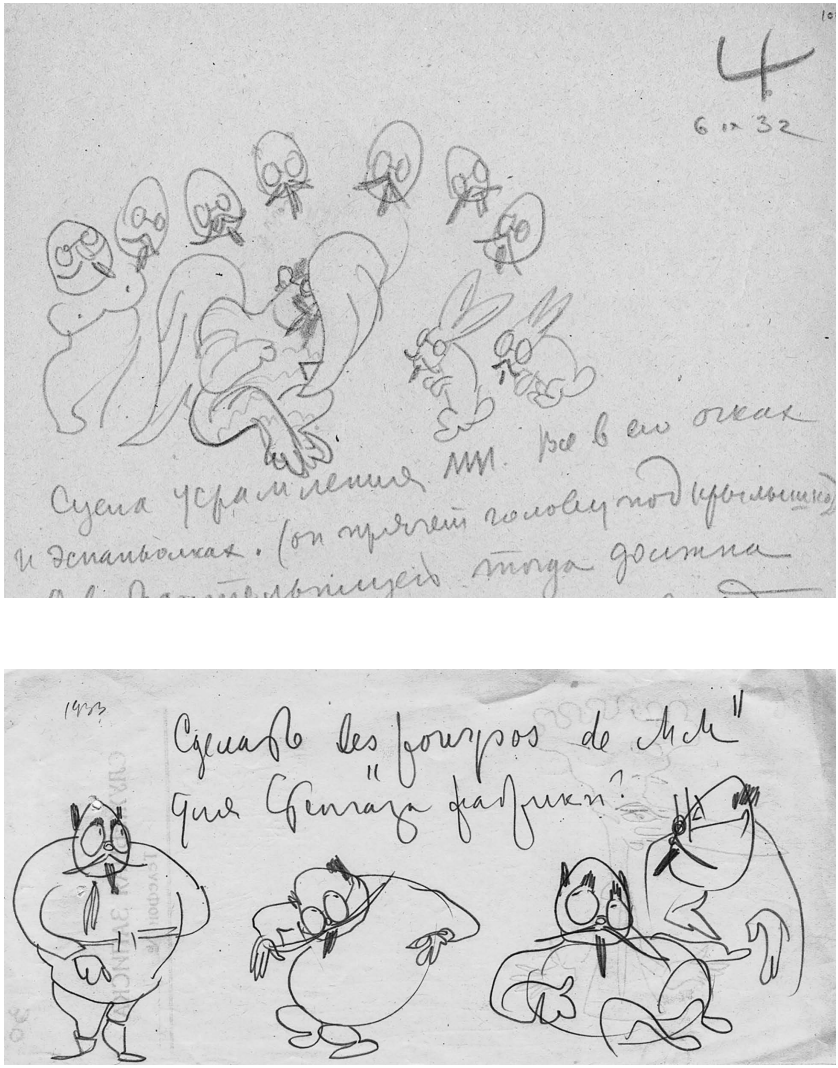


Figure 10.4. Maxim Maximovich multiplied and in variations. RGALI 1923-2-185, 100, and 1923-2-189, 30 (verso). Used with permission.

Socialism: Utopian and Scientific, with the maxim "First the movement, then the thing that moves"—as in nature or history, it is movement that we see first in art, and only afterward the objects that "move, combine, and are connected."[67] For Eisenstein, the dynamic is always the most magnetic component of a visual system, and in his drawings of Maxim we see "the rejection of the constraint of form, fixed once and for all, freedom from ossification, an ability to take on any form dynamically."[68]

Maxim's mutability in these drawings comes to stand in for the overarching mutability of the entire project, its formal plasticity and its ideological pulsation. As the film's eventual viewers were to have moved through these constantly mutating visuals, to have experienced the interpenetration of vastly different eras and their incompatible social structures, and to have navigated the comedic setups and payoffs that emerged from the diegetic phenomena, perhaps it was specifically this movement through the assorted forms that was meant to ensure both laughter and its ideological fidelity. No surprise then that the idea for *MMM* should have emerged originally, as *MM Buys and Sells*, during the conceptually fruitful summer of 1928, when Eisenstein was deeply engaged in the problem of bringing *Glass House* and Marx's *Capital* to the screen. In those projects, he had set himself the task of leading viewers along a series of complex material and economic relations, thereby making them think dialectically, according to Marx's method. In *MMM* it seems, inversely, that the constant formal transformations and empty dialectics of comedy, the schemata of its literary land mines and their eventual onscreen explosion, becomes a comedic method, and that viewers, passing through these movements, would have been expected thereby to think *in* comedy.

Intention and Anachronism

At the heart of *MMM*'s narrative conceit is the simple collision between two incompatible historical eras, Soviet contemporaneity and medieval Russian feudalism. This constantly charged conflict is the engine by which Eisenstein, as both writer and director, is able to both wind up and resolve all the film's plot contortions. As a result, it also fuels much of the formal innovation of the film's material methods. This comes, of course, as much in the constructive jumping between different times and spaces that is cinema's essential montage quality as it does in the more inventive metacinematic techniques described here. When the

boyars and associates are sent by the narrator rushing back into the past, the film is meant to suddenly run backward: "Shot in reverse/The *boyars* scurry/Off to distant/Bygone ages."[69]

The multidirectional path of the film accentuates the dominant tendency of the script's temporal structure—a constant attempt to perform the same sort of transgressive movement between ages that seems to defy conceivable representation. In *¡Que viva México!*, this juxtaposition of contrasting epochs had been pursued horizontally, through the structural combination of contiguous episodes and distinct but adjacent geographical bodies. In *MMM*, however, the conflict is instantaneous, occurring within the frame, synchronously, underlying the composition of almost every proposed shot for the film. In other words, Eisenstein not only wanted to create a discourse that would render possible the consideration of divergent time periods (their contents and qualities) in immediate contiguity to one another but also proposes the possibility of their *simultaneous* existence in one integral time and space. All levels of production were to confirm this: one sketch for the patriarch's costume showed his robes girded by a ribbon and pinned with a star-shaped brooch; next to this, Eisenstein writes "Intentional anachronism in the ribbons, stars, and medallions."[70]

It becomes clear that the ancient ornamental language of the church is meant to merge visually with the ornamentation of Soviet heraldry. Such "intentional anachronism" is the organizing principle of the film's complex arrangement of chronologies. We may read this in another drawing, of the executioner standing at the *lobnoe mesto*, ax on shoulder and hand on hip. The figure is mirrored by a drawing of a public works janitor who stands in an identical posture, his broom resting at the same angle on his shoulder as the executioner's ax. A caption beside the drawing notes that the two figures ought to pace back and forth in synchronicity.[71] As the sixteenth century collides with the 1930s, it is a collision of not only eras but also of the social structures (*uklady*) that they represent. The patriarchal *uklad* (read as feudalism, symbolized in the *boyar* and patriarch) and the socialist *uklad* (the factory workers, the Red Army, the Moscow police) collide as the premise for *MMM*—it provides the comedic setup and the narrative tension—but it is on the field of the social structures interpolated between these two dissimilar eras that the ideological thrust of the film plays out. Maksim, his fellow workers, his assistants, Ida, the market salespeople, et cetera, all bear the vestiges of the previous *uklady*, most particularly the capitalism of private enterprise. The mind-set that accompanies this social structure,

in the world of *MMM*, is philistinism, and as Eisenstein claims in his introduction, the task he sets for himself in the script is the exposing of the error in the enthusiasm that precipitates from this type of private enterprise, even when well intended, against the need for the "authentic pathos of our days."

MMM's complex layering of time, its idiosyncratic verse format, its ornate chapter structure, its motif of intensely metacinematic junctures throughout, along with its unrelentingly grotesque, porous, mutating bodies and warping, collapsing spaces of action, all combine to make the project a truly complex piece of potential cinematic material. Maybe it was the practical difficulty of shooting this script that ultimately caused the project to stall; maybe it was a sudden burst of political expediency on Eisenstein's part. Or perhaps it was, as Rostislav Iurenev suggests, that the Soviet film leadership, despite having accepted the project for production, was not at all fond of the script or its preproduction material.[72] It is ultimately unclear what it was that definitively led Eisenstein to set the project aside. What is clear is that the *MMM* project ended abruptly in late spring of 1933, left to illumine the archive instead of the screen.[73] More clearly perhaps than in any other of his unrealized projects do we see the preparatory materials producing an idiosyncratic set of qualities meant merely to fade as they develop (a script in verse that could never exist anywhere but on paper). The attempt to apprehend the preproduction materials as "projections" of a fixed and finished film (as Eisenstein explicitly encouraged their readers to do), may be the key to envisioning their intended finality on screen. But if film is inherently fragmentary, a seemingly steady form constantly contending with its own rupture and montage, then we may be reminded that continuity, unity, and stability of form are perceptual misimpressions—and, indeed, that concepts such as "completion" or "resolution" become at the least phenomenally evasive, if not yet another cause for laughter.

Chapter 7

Moscow

> My notes are drowning in unopened suitcases, buried like Pompeii in my one-room suite under a pile of books: there is not even room to unpack them. My notes are drowning while they wait to be realized.
>
> —Sergei Eisenstein, "Help Yourself!," 1932

At the end of the First Five-Year Plan, in support of the newly established state emphasis on Moscow as the absolute center and modern Russian capital of the Soviet Union, the weekly cultural and political newspaper *Literaturnaia Gazeta* published, as the third page of its 11 July 1933 issue, a series of essays devoted to Moscow. The essays were grouped under the general title *Proletarian Moscow Awaits Its Artist* (Proletarskaia Moskva zhdet svoego khudozhnika).[1] The left of the page features a challenge to artists from party official Ivan Drozhzhin to "represent the new Moscow" (a city in the process of radical reconstruction; an emerging paradise of technology, industry, and culture; and the true home, the nucleus, of the world proletariat) in prose, poetry, and drama; next to it, a passage of glowing Moscow reminiscences by Theodore Dreiser, translated from his 1928 book *Dreiser Looks at Russia*; to the right, an essay by American communist and editor of *New Masses*, Walt Carmon, who seems to have been currently residing in Moscow, detailing the symbolic value that contemporary Moscow had for Western leftist writers, world-famous and otherwise (Dos Passos; Michael Gold).

In the middle of all this, taking up the most column inches, is an essay by Sergei Eisenstein, "Moscow in Time" (*Moskva vo vremeni*), in which the director details his idea for and his formal approach to his

currently developing film project on the Russian capital, a film he had simply titled *Moscow*.[2] Eisenstein begins his essay with a perhaps unexpected reference to the words of the medieval *igumen* (abbot), Philotheus of Pskov, an uneasy contemporary of Ivan the Terrible and often credited with devising the concept of Moscow as the third Rome (following Rome itself and then Constantinople). Eisenstein reaches into history to quote Philotheus's imperial thesis: "Two Romes have fallen, but the third stands, and there will be no fourth."[3] Eisenstein follows this backward glance into time with a forward-looking antithesis—Moscow, he claimed, has conceptually become "the focal point for the socialist future of the entire world." The synthesizing logic of these two premises, to which Eisenstein leads his reader, is that Moscow, the ancient inheritor of Roman power and the locus of the dawning new era of socialism, is a city that may be seen as "the living image of the path leading to socialism"—a conception not at all at odds with the party imperative to reflect a new image of Moscow.[4] Yet while party rhetoric seems to emphasize that Moscow has already more or less arrived at its position of the proletarian capital, the subsequent paragraphs of Eisenstein's article prioritize a Moscow (the city itself and the theme or concept it engenders) that is nearly all "path," a capital marked by mutability and motion—indeed, Eisenstein highlights Moscow's "processes" and "dynamics" and emphasizes both the city's "coming into being," and the Moscow citizen's "growth" (from serf to proletariat).[5]

After the initial enthusiasm with which he begins his article, Eisenstein admits that the real image of developing Soviet Moscow is all but boundless, ungraspable—just like the working processes of cinema are ungraspable in their entirety. With this parallel, the filmmaker quickly leaps to propose the method by which his new film project, *Moscow*, will tackle this dilemma. The film, he explains, will couch its dynamism and dramatic turns by following Russia through history, out of backwardness and into world leadership.[6] He thus conceives of the project as a "gauntlet run through the history of the Russian state," suggesting that, in this violent dash through history, "it might be possible to say, in Marx's words about the history of the proletariat, that 'it is written into the history of mankind in the inextinguishable signs of blood and fire.' "

Eisenstein's proposal, by lifting and somewhat deforming the words of Marx's original, cleverly nests three simultaneous histories within one another: the history of the Russian state, the history of the proletariat, and the history of humankind. As is often the case, Eisenstein's

approximation of the source he is quoting—here from the twenty-fourth chapter of *Capital*, "The Secret of Primitive Accumulation"—reveals an imprecision that we can take to be somewhat conceptually productive. None of the major Russian translations of Marx extant in the 1930s seems to use the exact wording Eisenstein does in his article—for example, in the original 1872 Russian translation of *Kapital*, the phrase does not appear at all; in later editions, including the publication most immediately preceding Eisenstein's article, the 1932 Partizdat edition, it appears with entirely different wording.[7] What seems most likely is that Eisenstein is paraphrasing Marx from his original German.

Where Eisenstein presents the history of the proletariat as "written into the history of mankind in the inextinguishable signs of blood and fire" ("vpisana v istoriiu chelovechestva neugasimymi znakami krovi i ognia"), Marx's German reads (in regard to the newly minted wage-laborer, a freed serf dispossessed and displaced among the low-level chaos of private capitalism's structures) "die Geschichte dieser ihrer Expropriation ist in die Annalen der Menschheit eingeschrieben mit Zügen von Blut und Feuer."[8] The authoritative English translation of the passage is remarkably exact in its rendering of the original: "the history of this, their expropriation, is written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire."[9] In other words, for Marx, the history in question is, as Eisenstein suggests, a history of the proletariat, but it is specifically the history of their expropriation, the removal of their means of production and subsequent wage enslavement, that is written into the history of humanity in these fiery letters. With the English (translated by Moore and Aveling and edited by Engels) "letters" and the German "*Zügen*" (see *Schriftzug*) there is certainly interpretive space for Eisenstein's rendering of the Russian *znaki*. All these words can be taken as a kind of script (stroke, symbol) with which a history might be inscribed. Less scientifically than Marx, Eisenstein sees, for the Moscow project, the inevitable emergence of the Russian proletariat as the product of what he calls a "double enslavement": first to domestic parasites and second to the fat cats of worldwide capital. This simple approach to Marx's dialectical complexity may have appeared to toe the line of the period's officially reductivist Stalinist policy, but in the context of the article it foregrounds the blood of these "inextinguishable signs" in that it accords the *Russian* proletariat a special place (Eisenstein begins the article, after all, with Holy, Eternal Moscow), giving the class a specifically *national* character. It becomes evident in the article that what Eisenstein intends to show in his film is the deep biography of the

Moscow-Russian proletariat. And that this telling, in order to have the impact he hoped it might, would require an intricate formal innovation.

Years later, while writing his unfinished theoretical text *Method* and analyzing the ways in which biology fuses the present to the past, the director would recall the *Moscow* project in this way: "Among my swarm of unrealized projects, there is one piece of creative material that never made it to the screen—*Moscow*. In and of itself it is a nice illustration of the 'method of pathos' as a leap for biography beyond the limits of character."[10] The "leap for biography beyond the limits of character" that the director recalls here was his conceit to construct a biography of the city (and by extension its proletariat citizen) that would cover around six hundred years of history, moving from Ivan III or IV up to the triumphant Soviet 1930s. This was to be worked out through focusing on specific key moments of that history. Different drafts of the script outline highlight different moments, but generally they are the Mongol yoke and throwing it off (in the fifteenth century); Ivan's IV's consolidation of power (1550s); Peter I's further consolidation and modernization (end of the seventeenth century); Napoleon's invasion of 1812 and the burning of Moscow; the revolutions of 1905 and 1917; the death of Lenin with Stalin's oratorial oath to continue Lenin's struggle (1924); and the culmination of all this in the Seventeenth Party Congress ("The Congress of Victors," 1934) and completion of the construction of the Moscow subway (1935, officially). These last two events had yet to occur at the time of Eisenstein's writing but were already growing storied in their anticipation. What Eisenstein hoped to show in moving this way through Moscow's history was the development of the class war, told through its different phases, in one continuous plotline—though it is not always clear, one must observe, how the proletariat Muscovite was necessarily to feature in some of these major historical moments, organized as they often are around prominent figures of history (Ivan, Peter, Lenin, etc.).

Eisenstein's very specific invocation of the gauntlet-run is operative in this structure, implying that the viewer should become metaphorical to the gauntlet's condemned runner, bound to follow an arduous path punctuated by a series of crises, the violent blows that rain down on the body; just so, the history of Moscow is one that travels a continuous line from medieval Rus' to the birth of its socialist citizen in the twentieth century, its development ordered by the crises that the above historic junctures represent. In one of his notes for the project, from 20 January 1934, the director writes, "*Moscow* is the 'Potemkin lions'

spread out over . . . the entire piece: five eras, like the five stages of the movement, united as if in one unified leap."[11] The director hoped that the unity of the film's structure would be secured by leaps of pathos (or "shifts," as he would write in English in some notes) from one historical moment to the next, that the segmentation of these various epochs and phases of development could be experienced as a kind of stream that would allow the normal unities of dramatic setting and character to be felt.[12] Likewise, what characters the film might present to its audiences would by necessity grow in excess of their individual biographies and historical eras and into a general history of advancing class forces and actions. As some notes indicate, certain characters that appear in different eras of Moscow history, experiencing the crises inherent in that era, would seamlessly merge with characters from subsequent eras ("from grandfather to father and to grandson, to great-grandson"), blending as if into one unified character arc—and, we can assume, very likely to be played by the same actors across the gaps in time.[13] In a note of 1 January 1934, the director writes, "he is one—one face—into hundreds: that is, many episodes, in which it is always him, and his face in various manifestations."[14] With this, the idea seems to have been the creation of a kind of transindividual relationship to character that would facilitate the suprabiography that the film was conceived to be.[15] Some notes even give the impression that Eisenstein was interested in doubling this supracharacter to a set of brothers, one rich and one poor, in order to demonstrate the class struggle across the ages, in the style of Cain and Abel.[16] Though the biblical theme does not seem to have penetrated too deeply into Eisenstein's plans, the basic principle, apparent everywhere in *Moscow*'s structure, was that chronological time would be made a mutable entity and that character, setting, and dramatic situations related to different times would need to interpenetrate. Indeed, we can see Eisenstein attempting with the *Moscow* project to combine the historical simultaneity he experimented with in his *Mexico* project with the morphological dynamism he had recently developed in *MMM*.[17]

Shakespearize More!

The imaginary film's peculiar historical structure and complex relation to time and space required a dynamic visual method that would enable the proposed leaps and shifts from juncture to juncture and stage to stage. What visual thread could ensure that viewers might follow what was an otherwise fragmented and elliptical story? In his article on

the film, Eisenstein proposes a solution—what he calls a "new form of Shakespearization": "We want to produce a visual design for the film in a different Shakespearean tradition: composing it according to the four elements—water, earth, fire, and air—the combination of which determined the harmony and disharmony of Shakespeare's universe."[18]

Eisenstein's invocation of Shakespeare, along with his use of the specific term *Shakespearization* was neither facile nor capricious, but rather a sly engagement with an idea that was, as the director was working on the *Moscow* project, urgently making its way through the Soviet literary press. As preparations for a new centralized Union of Soviet Writers were being proposed, and the foundational principles of the stylistically unified Soviet literature that was to emerge from it (socialist realism) determined, the challenge to "Shakespearize" was a common one. On the one hand, this call for Shakespearization was a call to produce a world literature that might function with the enduring transnational power of Shakespeare; on the other hand, this was a mandate for writers to create characters in the style of Shakespeare, ones that could both successfully embody a philosophical ideal or historical moment *and at the same time* demonstrate universally familiar and sympathetic emotional and psychological lives.[19] Soviet literary idealogues had seized on the idea from its appearance in the correspondence of one notable and avowed fanatic of Shakespeare—Karl Marx. In a letter of April 1859, written to the Prussian writer and philosopher Ferdinand Lasalle, addressing the latter's new play *Franz von Sickingen* (1859), Marx criticized Lasalle for creating flat characters that speak and move more, as it seemed to him, in the style of Schiller. Marx tells Lasalle that he needs to "Shakespearize more" ("Du hättest . . . mehr shakespearisieren müssen").[20]

Before Eisenstein began work on *Moscow*, in 1929, Alexander Fadeev delivered a speech to his fellow leaders of the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP), which he titled "Down with Schiller!" ("Doloi Shillera!"). In this speech, Fadeev had employed Marx's characterization of Shakespeare alongside similar sentiments found in Engels's letters to Lasalle. For Fadeev, the binary Schiller/Shakespeare that he read in Marx demonstrated what he called the "two fundamental artistic methods"—idealism and realism—with Shakespeare epitomizing the realistic approach to representation, the necessary model for proletarian writers.[21] Fadeev's article was subsequently printed in *Literaturnaia Gazeta* and then reprinted in the journal *Na literaturnom postu*, both in late 1929 issues, and, in the coming years, whether as a direct result of his argument or as an inevitable development in the articulation of

the socialist realist style, several notable publications would develop Fadeev's deployment of the Shakespeare that Marx had characterized.[22]

In 1932, a section of the third edition of the prominent nonperiodical scholarly journal *Literaturnoe nasledstvo* (Literary heritage), was devoted to the Marx and Engels correspondence with Lasalle. Here the letters were published with a preface and a long essay by Gyorgy Lukacs, in which Lukacs emphasizes to readers that the distinction that Marx draws between Shakespeare and Schiller is not "just a difference in personal tastes" but rather that, "for Marx and Engels, what is required of the drama is the realistic depiction of historical class forces as they actually occurred, the visual demonstration of their actual moving forces and the actual objective conflicts, which is only possible through the poetic means that Marx designates under the term 'Shakespearization.'"[23] These sentiments are echoed in the "Shakespeare" entry of the *Great Soviet Encyclopedia* (BSE), appearing in a volume released in 1933, in which Anatoly Lunacharsky highlights Marx's criticism of Lasalle: that the latter misguidedly turned his characters "into simple mouthpieces of their time" whereas Shakespeare's characters are depicted "with their living passions, which, being tied to class interests and great elemental movements, direct their personalities to a far greater extent than would purely intellectual notions."[24] Likewise, in the *Literary Encyclopedia* entry for *obraz* (image), appearing in a volume of 1934, Leonid Timofeev refers to the Marx-Engels Shakespeare mode as an emphasis on "the living quality of the composition, the preservation of individual, concrete, living properties within the phenomena that the writer depicts."[25]

In following the development of this tendency, one may easily see how the "realistic" and "living" Shakespeare became a valuable and operative paradigm for the newly emergent socialist realist style. These threads can be seen to culminate, at least as far as Eisenstein's 1933 article is concerned, in the 11 March 1933 issue of *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, which was devoted to the fiftieth anniversary of Marx's death. Prominently, on the second page of the issue, Sergei Dinamov, one of the paper's editors and an expert of English and American literature, published an article with the quotational title "Shakespearize More!" Dinamov's article situates Shakespeare in his Marxian image as a "great realist," a "militant artist of his time," one who attempted to "uncover new foundations for his class"—and it elaborates the following dictates for Soviet writers:

> To Shakespearize means to find the living and real images that express the development and movement of reality. To Shakespearize

> means to be in one's own time, to be within today, growing into the future. To Shakespearize means to be at the level of the leading ideas of the era, to master science, knowledge, culture, the doctrine of Marx-Engels-Lenin-Stalin so that this wealth of ideas becomes not impoverished, so that the contents of art remain both clear and complex, just as the dialectic of life is both clear and complex. To Shakespearize means to be a passionate warrior for one's class, to arm it with the weaponry of art. To Shakespearize means to be on the front lines of life, fighting and creating, building and battling. To Shakespearize means to seek new and powerful forms of artistic creation, discarding the empty ornamentation of "innovation" and building an art of perfect thought and form.[26]

Dinamov's prominent refinement of the "Shakespearization" rhetoric to a set of directives for Soviet writers helped establish the debate about Shakespeare's direct relevance for socialist contemporaneity that would continue in the press throughout the year and into the next several.[27] But it is the appearance of Dinamov's article in *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, the same publication in which Eisenstein would publish his article about *Moscow* just a few months later, that imparts to the film director's mention of "Shakespearization" such poignancy—especially if we consider that Dinamov, as an editor of the paper, was very likely one of the people to have invited Eisenstein to submit his article to the journal.

When Eisenstein refers to Shakespearization, it is with the suggestion that his film will "discover" a "new form" of it, thus making it a direct response to Dinamov's suggestion that the Shakespearean artist will "seek new and powerful forms." And the emphasis that he places on the themes of time and movement do not seem to be entirely out of step with Dinamov's directives either. And yet the plan that Eisenstein lays out for the Shakespearization he meant to enact in the film is almost shocking in the extent to which it ignores and departs from the orthodox version of Shakespeare that was being so ardently promoted in the Soviet press. Instead of focusing on the "living properties" and "living passions" of "realistic" characters, Eisenstein was compelled to move in what seems the opposite direction, to create a superbiography, generalizing and distributing personae across multiple iterations of character and multiple time periods—to create an entirely inverted "living person." Perhaps even more astonishing in its esotericism is the director's pronouncement that he planned to unite these disparate pieces

of character by employing what he saw as a "different Shakespearean tradition," and a markedly more arcane one: using the four classical elements to organize the phenomena in his work.

Water, earth, fire, and air, as material throughlines, would make a potent and comprehensible plot possible, one in which the unities of time and character would be observable despite the gauntlet-run necessitated by the long history he intended to cover. Though Eisenstein presents this concept as Shakespearean, he clearly invokes the elements as an entrée into a far more ancient way of understanding and structuring the cosmos, one that predates even Greek philosophy, persisting through Medieval and Renaissance Europe, with analogues in various Eastern cultures as well.[28] For Eisenstein, this system's allure is that it was a primordial, elemental approach to perception and materiality—and undeniably, the visual and tactile possibilities of such a system were attractive to the director. In this worldview, the four elements also correspond with the four humors (or bodily fluids) and the four personal dispositions that derive from them. Fire is correlated with yellow bile and the choleric disposition, earth correlates with black bile and the melancholic disposition, water with phlegm and the phlegmatic disposition, and finally air with blood and the sanguine type. In a diary entry of 3 March 1933, Eisenstein writes that "an epic is the personification of the dialectic of the powers of nature. The 'elemental' tragedy carries within itself this connection as well"—he then annotates this with the attribution "Aksenov on the four elements in Shakespeare (water, fire, air, earth) as *unterlage* placed at the root of action and character."[29] Indeed, it had been argued by Ivan Aksenov, a Soviet scholar of Elizabethan England, that Shakespeare, along with a multitude of other writers and artists, often organized his work around this cosmology; for example, the forty-fourth and forty-fifth sonnets explicitly address the four dispositional types, and one might understand the central characters of plays such as *Henry IV* and *Othello* to have been structured around the four dispositions.[30]

Eisenstein was a close friend of Aksenov—he attended the expert's lectures and grew close with him over discussions of Shakespeare and Ben Jonson, and Aksenov was even the author of the film director's first biography (written in 1933–35 and published only in 1991).[31] Eisenstein was also a devoted reader of Shakespeare. But one could argue that he was no more a textual expert of the Elizabethan playwright than he was of Marx's political-philosophical writings. Which is to say that his deep appreciation for both was one that was less scientific than it

was instinctive and selective. One senses this intuitive appreciation for the Shakespearean in the very structure of Eisenstein's *Moscow* essay, which bases the pathos of its first section on Marx's "signs of blood and fire." This selection from *Capital*—not at all arbitrary—was one that, as we have seen, Eisenstein translated directly from German in order to attain the original meaning of Marx's text. In Marx's "Zügen von Blut und Feuer" and Eisenstein's "signs of blood and fire" we see a first appearance of the primordial elements (with blood the humor of the air element) and their ability to represent the development of the proletariat, and also receive a demonstration of Marx's tendencies to what could be considered a Shakespearean idiom in his own writing.[32] Eisenstein insinuates, then, from the beginning of the essay, that the elements, and fire most prominently, are to be central concepts for his new film.

The film, as we saw earlier, was to have begun its narrative in pre-Muscovite Rus'. And Eisenstein explains that water—like the fluids of genesis, conception—was to be the element correlating all the initial scenes of medieval Russia, with its rivers and waterways connecting disparate regions at the time of the Mongol yoke. Then, "like an amphibious creature crawling out onto dry land," the history of the Russian proletariat was to be told, with emphasis on earth, and the gathering and consolidation of land under Ivan the Terrible. The consolidation of lands is to be correlated with the consolidation of power, the baton of which is "passed through the years" to Peter the Great, his manipulation of peasants out of the patriarchal feudal system and into exploitation as indentured laborers in military factories. He writes, "Ancient wisdom considered that solid ground made up the earth. But under the earth—inside—was fire."[33] With earth passing into fire, Eisenstein imagines creating scenes in the first munitions factories established by Peter, with their cavernous underground forges—and that these scenes would be set on the multilayered depths of Paranesi's famous conceptual drawings for prisons in his *Carceri*.[34]

The element of fire then was to take on the central driving force of the film, facilitating the bulk of the shifts in time as well: from the underground fires of Peter I to Napoleon's 1812 burning of Moscow and on to the fires of the twentieth-century Russian revolutions. After this, the finale of the film would arrive with the fourth element, the "fresh air" of future socialism.

While, as Katerina Clark points out, Eisenstein's choice of historical plot points is more or less a reflection of the official Soviet historiography of the time, it is also obvious that for Eisenstein, it was not this

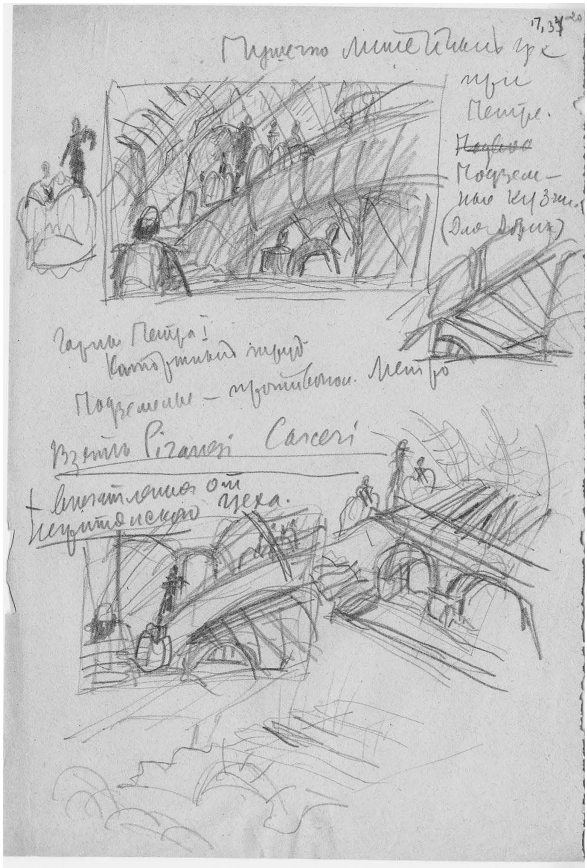


Figure 11.1. Drawings of possible scenes in Peter the Great's factories. RGALI 1923-2-191, 20. Used with permission.

historical material but rather the cinematic method that was to be the true value of the film.[35] That method depends heavily on the use of the elements as primordial visual signs without any necessary symbolic or denotative referent; the four elements could serve to connect shot to shot, scene to scene, era to era, and provide a thoroughgoing pathway, a throughline in the absence of causal connection or dramatic narrative sequence. Moreover, the elements could allow the viewer to experience the images in a state more inclined to the sensual than to the logical. As we will see, this treatment of the elements appears in the *Moscow* project as clear preparation for the theorization of prelogical modes of thought, which Eisenstein would later present in *Method* and other works. Indeed, in Clark's analysis of *Moscow*, she links this intended use

of the elements to an overarching interest the director had, especially in the 1930s, in exploring the possibilities of what she calls "universal forms."[36] But what is missing from this view of the project's design is something we may see clearly in Eisenstein's quotation of Marx: that *Moscow*'s fiery throughline was the means by which Eisenstein hoped to tie the *universal* (i.e., the history of mankind) both to a *national* essence and history and to a specific *class* history. And as water transitioned to earth, earth to fire, fire to ever more fire, and then fire to air, the director's hope was that these elemental morphologies would enact a sort of visual rapture that would give the otherwise hopscotch plot its necessary sense of structure and pathos and allow viewers to leap from the particular (of class and national struggle) to the universal. The extent to which the elements, and their potential to underwrite the revolutionary power of the cinematic form, began to fascinate Eisenstein is beautifully expressed in an offhand note from 6 February 1934, where he writes, "by the way: *Potemkin*—water/*Gen*.[*eral*] *Lin*.[*e*]—land (one of its many titles!)/*Moscow*—fire and air."[37]

An Idolatrous Passion for Fire

Eisenstein was candid about the fact that fire was the element with the most intended screen time, calling it the "central part" and the "controlling link" of the film. Many terms for fire appear in the *Moscow* essay, as well as in the notes for the project in Eisenstein's archive: general fire (*ogon'*), the phenomenon of fire (*pozhar*), flame (*plamia*), campfire/bonfire (*kostior*), burning glow (*zarevo*), and conflagration or ashes (*pepelishche*). In the plans, fire always appears under the earth, burning in Peter's arms-production factories, and then growing to engulf the city with Napoleon's invasion. From there, it spreads to the fields around the capital with the evacuating populace, melts into the fires set during the 1905 peasant revolts in Moscow's surrounding regions, shifts to the 1905 bonfires and the immolation of the revolutionary barricades in Moscow's Krasnaia Presnia neighborhood, and then ironically moves from the fireworks and sparklers at the 1913 celebration of the three-hundredth anniversary of the reign of the house of Romanov, to the machine-gun fire against the Kremlin walls as the Soviet proletariat emerges and seizes power, to the bonfires lit spontaneously at Lenin's death and burial, and finally to the burning fire of Stalin's oath to carry further the charge of Lenin. The reader of Eisenstein's notes must imagine the attendant path of the proletariat from indentured servitude to socialist collaborator in this fiery dash.

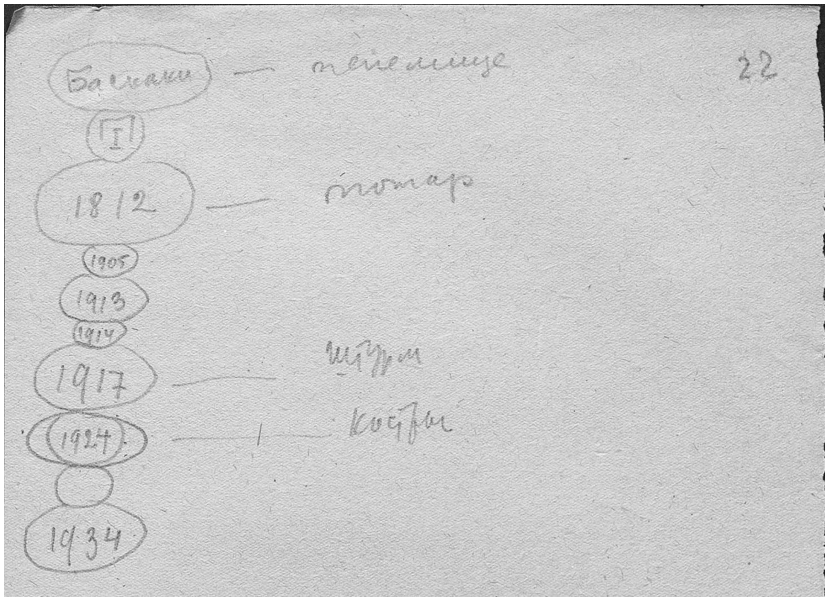


Figure 11.2. Eisenstein's diagram correlating historical junctures with varieties of fire form. RGALI, 1923-1-359, 22. Used with permission.

Schematically, the plans were worked out in diagrams where, as in one particular case, the important historical junctures are agglutinated one on top of the other, and a different type of fire is assigned to each one. These fires were illustrative of the material details of these moments, their thrust was to operate not only in this capacity, according to their real historical function, but also and more importantly as temporal transitions from one moment to the next—a "transition from flame to flame" as Eisenstein writes in his notes.[38] He imagines just such a transition against the backdrop of the burning glow (*zarevo*) of 1812 Moscow, as it is seen from its environs and where, suddenly, and imperceptibly, it has become 1905, and radicalized peasants are beginning to light the fires of the uprising. In Eisenstein's logic, this is a leap of pathos that occurs through the structure. One year exists in simultaneity with another, separated by a century of chronology, but connected by the overwhelmingly powerful visual element of fire. Likewise, simultaneous space is overcome by the element: in one note, the director emphasizes the fiery unity between the 1905 peasant fires outside Moscow and the burning barricades within the city: "*krasnyi petukh* [literally, "red rooster," a peasant term for wildfires] and Krasnaia Presnia [the revolutionary name of one of the Moscow neighborhoods in which barricades were erected in 1905]."[39]

Fire, as both elemental phenomenon and visual force, would be a major topic of analysis for Eisenstein in his 1940 writing on Walt Disney, forming a fundamental part of the director's larger investigation into the concept of plasmaticity that he saw demonstrated so masterfully in Disney's early films. He uses fire to address the paradoxical concept of "mutable form," illustrating that such forms in constant morphological movement can be understood as a natural phenomenon and, moreover, that the viewing of such phenomena—as in a Disney animation—allows us to slip into new modes of thought, to "think folklorically, mythologically, pre-logically, however we want."[40] Eisenstein writes here of fire: "What can be more capable of expressing the dream of fluid diversity of forms than fire? . . . [What can be] even more violently paced in taking on the most unexpected shapes?"[41] He notes the value of fire for religious mythopoesis, its presence at the foundation of so many major religious narratives (Judeo-Christianity's burning bush, Zoroaster's and Buddha's heavenly fires). He traces the allure of fire through German sexologists Erich Wulffen, Iwan Bloch, and Paul Adolf Näcke, from whose theories he extracts the principles of fire's phototropism (something he sees as inherent in all levels of matter), fire's impulse to destruction, and, most important, the idea that the constant movement of a flame produces in its beholder an effect similar to that caused by alcohol or by dancing.[42] And he proposes that the most beautiful images of fire are not to be found in abstracted religious myth but rather in the concrete works of artists where it may appear both as an aesthetic object and as an imaginative device—suggesting that we may consider fire to be a "kind of cradle of metonymy."[43]

Eisenstein then demonstrates the protean power of fire and its strange primordial attraction and potential for artistic force by excerpting passages from prose works by Maxim Gorky. According to Eisenstein, Gorky was "one of the greatest artists in general," one "with particularly deep ties to fire," and his "fieriness in the battle for the great cause of the working class . . . seems to be an embodiment of that magnetic pull of the element of fire"—and this language undeniably carries traces of Eisenstein's idea of fire's potential usefulness to demonstrate the history of the proletariat.[44] Over several pages, Eisenstein explicates sections of Gorky's nonfiction 1924 story "Fires" ("Pozhary"). In this story, a general meditation on fire, the author begins by highlighting its overwhelmingly captivating quality: "Great is the enchantment of fire's magical power. I've often observed people lose themselves and give in to the beauty of this power's sinister playfulness; I'm not

immune to its influence either. . . . I am prone to spending entire days staring hungrily into the fire."[45]

By quoting this passage, Eisenstein reasserts the hypnotic force of fire, its ability to activate certain primal thought processes. Further, he turns to fire's power to punctuate key moments in a person's life, uniting them through the common presence of flame: "I've noticed that people have some kind of idolatrous passion for fire. You know . . . that royal high holidays, birthdays, weddings and other moments . . . are accompanied by illuminations, playing with fire. Church services too, and it is to these that funerals should be attached."[46]

Eisenstein no doubt detects in Gorky's description of the human desire to include fire at crucial life junctures a resonance with his own plan to punctuate with flame the crisis moments of his film, and thereby meld the discrete points of his gauntlet-run into a continuity. And, finally, most obviously in accord with Eisenstein's Moscow proletariat rising "from flame to flame," Gorky too tells the history of the class struggle through fire, when, in reasserting that fire is "a spectacle that pleases everyone," he states, "the poor man feels good when the rich man burns."[47]

In his notes for the *Moscow* project, a detail appears on one of the pages where the director is developing imagery to be used for the depiction of the 1812 Moscow fire. A simple note from the director to himself: "cf. *Débâcle* Zola."[48] The 1892 novel *La débâcle* by Zola is one of the best-known fictional representations of the end of France's Second Empire and the conflagrations accompanying the Paris Commune, and particularly poignant within it is Zola's description of the burning of the Palace of the Tuileries as enacted by the revolutionary Communards. In Zola, fire is a chaotic symbol of a Dionysian reverie, but it is also a sign of revolutionary transformation—and indeed Eisenstein had read *La débâcle* in 1926 in preparation for his shooting of the storming of the Winter Palace in *October*.[49] One easily imagines Eisenstein's thrill as he read Zola's description of the Communards' red flag waving above the burning palace before it was itself consumed by the flames. That Eisenstein was considering Zola's novel as he pondered the fire scenes of *Moscow* demonstrates the extent to which the project and its treatment of elemental fire were fundamental in the development of his later theory of fire's transformative plasmaticity. In fact, Eisenstein refers to this passage from Zola in both his *Disney* essay and in *Nonindifferent Nature*:

> The kerosene that they poured on the parquet, the curtains, and the upholstery made the flame so strong that the iron railings

> of the balconies twisted, and the tall fireplaces burst, with their enormous stucco suns, now red hot. . . .
>
> Maurice laughed madly in a burning delirium.
>
> A lovely holiday in the State Council and the Tuileries . . . the facade is illuminated, the chandeliers burning, the women dancing. . . . Yes, dance in your smoking skirts, with your flaming chignons.[50]

In this passage, as in the ones from Gorky, we can see a clear connection with what he wanted to demonstrate as the aesthetic power of fire in *Moscow*—its induction into primal, sensual ways of thinking and its vitality as a revolutionary force. As the director developed his thoughts on fire in *Moscow*, it even occurred to him that the scenes of fire might be the perfect moment to enact his technique of cinematic interior monologue.[51]

Before *Moscow*, some of Eisenstein's film projects had put fire to very prominent use: *Strike*, for example, turns on the moment when a fire is set by provocateurs among the striking proletariat and is then

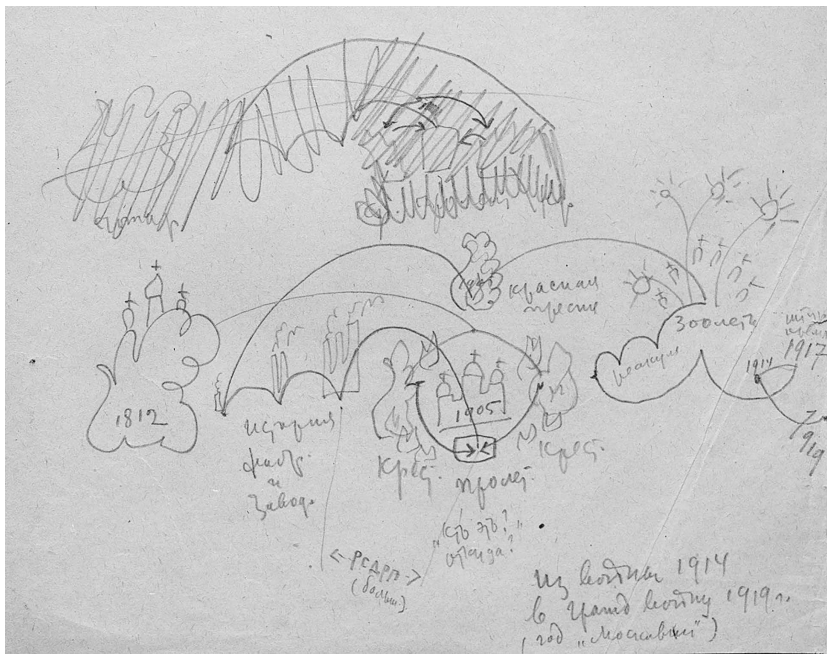


Figure 11.3. Spatial and relational rendering of fiery historical junctures. RGALI, 1923-1-359, 30. Used with permission.

extinguished brutally by Tsarist firefighters; the *Sutter's Gold* script features the harrowing scene in which Sutter's opulent ranch burns to the ground, described in a flood of audiovisual cues. Films that he would work on after the *Moscow* project had been abandoned would also employ fire in this way: both versions of *Bezhin Meadow* included significant scenes of consumption by flame, of the arson and burning of both wheat fields and a collective farm machine depot, and described by the director's ideological detractors as overly "elemental" and insufficiently "socialist":[52] *Alexander Nevsky* would feature the burning of Pskov, the immolation of children and civilians, as well as the moment in Novgorod when Nevsky gains the full trust of his people and they sing, lifting endless lit torches toward the prince. Again, in these instances we have a coordination between the destructive force of fire and the magical, primal visual qualities of the flame.

If the *Moscow* project was conceived to be, as Eisenstein would later write, an embodiment of the "idea of an indissoluble unity that resides within us—both in sequence and in simultaneity—of epochs that are practically pre-time (prehistoric) and epochs that are markedly contemporary," fire appears as the element most capable of enacting that unity between disparate centuries.[53] As an elemental force with primal power, the quintessential image of mutable form, it operates as the visual presence of a historical time that is both segmented and continuous, sequential and simultaneous. Though schematic drawings by Eisenstein may give some sense of the visual enactment of Moscow history's telling by fire, one can only imagine how flame might have been used to enact its inherent destructive and mesmerizing properties, and, even more important, how these flames, constantly building and transporting us across chronology, might have affected the depiction of a history that was to culminate in the Seventeenth Congress of 1934. A strange sort of historiography emerges here, one perhaps imaginable only as historio-cinematography.

All Manner of Historical Material

History forced into a cinematic form or cinema straining to act as history: while developing the *Moscow* project, Eisenstein seems often to have clarified the task ahead of him by comparing it to the tasks he had set himself in previous projects. In one crucial note from a diary entry of 17 June 1933, he compares *Moscow* with his treatments of history in *The General Line* and in *¡Que viva México!*. He writes, "*Generalka*—dominion

over space. *Mexico*—space is equated with time . . . *Moscow*—dominion over time and its conquering." The remarkable extent to which Eisenstein hoped to conquer time in this work is evident in notes in which he imagines "From the protoplasm of the legendary and the inarticulation of 'the ancient' to the iron engraving of today."[54] The already complex task of depicting a historical progression from Ivan to Peter to 1812 to the revolutionary century seems to be compounded by the even more high-flown desire to make this work a metaphor for human development generally. And although the four elements were to have been the material platform for demonstrating both sprints through different types of time (human history and evolutionary history), the quixotic nature of the intention to conquer time in this way is immediately apparent.

And yet, conquering time, as an artistic imperative, is something that Eisenstein had been engaged in from his earliest experiments in film—and is a crucial motivation behind the majority of his writings on montage in all its varieties. The conceptual conflict between *cinematic* time and *actual* time is a dialectical one: the meeting of the two incommensurate entities constantly produces a new, third sort of time in the viewing experience. The cinematic manipulation of time, having now moved on from the molecular montage editing of Eisenstein's early films to the grand montage of eras that he attempts in *Moscow* and other projects of the early 1930s (*Mexico*, *MMM*) can be seen as a visual and narrative manifestation of the Marxian dialectical thinking. His strident call for experiencing "all eras at once" and its aesthetic disclosure in these projects produces a history for the Soviet present that is somehow both revolutionary and idiosyncratic. In *Moscow*, as a development from his innovations with the plans for *MMM*, Eisenstein attempts to depict historical time not as an anomaly within the contemporary but rather to show the inextricable value of the historical for the contemporary, the unbroken, elemental chain that connects contemporary Moscow to its deep and imperfect past. In line with party rhetoric, the Moscow of today is meant to be shown as triumphant, approaching its ideal, its "technology and industry" leading it to a "victory over nature."[55] And this victory of contemporaneity is—both through historical parallel and the basic structure of Eisenstein's montage of time—shown to be fully integrated with its past. When, from the 1940s, Eisenstein recalled his work on the *Moscow* project, he observed in its structure an obvious connection with the film that had occupied him most recently, *Ivan the Terrible*. Recalling the peculiar

gauntlet-run structural principle on which he had hoped to base *Moscow*, he synthesizes:

> When I took on the biographical film about Ivan the Terrible, I placed the very same principle (without thinking about it at all until today!) at the heart of Ivan's struggle across the various details of his forty-five years of life that years earlier I had placed at the foundation of *Moscow*.
>
> With this, the principle of the chronological chain of events in *Ivan the Terrible* is demolished, and yet every step of his biography works as a successive phase of a struggle.
>
> This is how the *unity of action* is achieved, even though here it isn't twenty-four hours over which the action takes place but forty-five years![56]

In *Ivan*, time would be conquered in a somewhat more modest way—instead of eight hundred years edited to fit the form of a dramatic unity, the director achieves the goal in forty-five. Ivan's biography becomes pliable to suit cinematic form in the same way that Eisenstein had hoped to make the suprabiography of the proletariat become pliable to the same form. The image of the Wandering Jew—a mythical figure who experiences vast swaths of history over the course of a normal human biography—appears in Eisenstein's *Moscow* notes as a model for the film's intended suprabiography; the connection between Eisenstein's *Ivan* and the Wandering Jew becomes hugely compelling.

Ivan the Terrible's relevance for *Moscow* goes beyond the fact that the two films were both to have featured the fifteenth-century despot (one overwhelmingly, the other glancingly) and that they both were to have operated according to Eisenstein's principles for editing large passages of time into cinematic unities. In *Ivan*, Eisenstein also resurrects other unmistakable principles of *Moscow*'s structure. The image of fire figures heavily in *Ivan*, especially at key moments of historical shift that play out externally, such as the coming into being of a united Russia, as well as internally (the pathos of Ivan). There is the fire of Zamoskvorechye, its flames seeming to lick the windows of the palace during the feast of Ivan's wedding to Anastasia, and then in the torches of the angry populace that bursts into the palace, first threatening and then supporting Ivan's new claim on the throne; there is Ivan's taking of Kazan with its cannons and explosions and the confirmation the victory gives to the tsar's title of *Kniaz' vseia Rusi*; and, finally, most dramatically, there is the scene at the bier of the slain tsaritsa, in which Ivan moves

from dejection to internal conviction and demands that all Russia call for his rule—his vision of absolute power crystallizing at the moment that his supporters rush in bearing candles and torches, surrounding him with fire, framing his face and those of his closest followers with their dancing flames.

It is at this crucial moment in the film, a historical turning point being forged in flame, that Eisenstein decides to return to the key text that had provided the foundation for his *Moscow* project: the thesis of Philotheus. Ivan menacingly recites the words that the *igumen* had written to the tsar's father and predecessor on the throne, and he inserts the name of the holy capital city, so that there will be no doubt about the identity of the third Rome: "Two Romes have fallen, and the third—Moscow—stands; there shall be no fourth." At this moment in *Ivan the Terrible*, the ways in which the film has caused the historical past to verge with the contemporary moment—in a way far subtler and more mysterious (through allegory) than *Moscow* was to have been—we see the monarchical and orthodox image of Moscow, the imperial evolution of Christian Rome and Byzantium speaking in place of socialist Moscow. Here, as if speaking from the past, the center and exemplar for all cities of the Soviet Union and its satellites, the "model socialist city," is given the position of primacy, at last, that Eisenstein had intended to give it a decade earlier in the unrealized *Moscow* project.

Like the other imaginary films that the present book examines, the fact of *Moscow*'s failure to be realized might be seen as almost a foregone conclusion. The director's ambitious plans, from the very beginning, seem to sketch out their impossibility as readily as they do their path to fruition. And yet, throughout his notes on the project, Eisenstein exudes the confidence of one convinced of his endeavor's rightness and necessity within his oeuvre—after all, he emphasizes offhand its rightful place as a conceptual inheritor to *Potemkin* and *The General Line*. And it seems he was nothing if not flexible too: when we return to the essay "Moscow in Time," in which the director presents his idea to the public, we see that it ends in a caveat from Eisenstein—that the preceding description (the gauntlet-run through history, Shakespeare, the four elements, the use of fire) was not at all a treatment for an actual screenplay. Eisenstein follows this clarification with a direct appeal to Soviet writers, a "concrete invitation" to rise and meet the peculiar challenge of this project, to collaborate in "direct contact with [him] on the screenplay."[57]

This final line, by all appearances a sincere and hopeful request, is followed by an addendum from the editorial staff of *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, who seem to have decided a little intervention was in order. The publication makes the following editorial statement: "While supporting the invitation of Comrade Eisenstein for collaborative work on the film *Moscow*, we consider it necessary to observe that, in our opinion, the main concern of the film ought to be the depiction of life and existence in socialist Moscow, which is something that could only be hindered by the overloading of the film with all manner of historical material. It seems to us that S. M. Eisenstein is standing precariously close to just such a danger."[58]

Here history becomes the primary obstacle to the valorization of the modern metropolis. A quick look at the issue's masthead reveals a list of names perhaps unsurprising in one of the main outlets of what would soon become the Union of Soviet Writers: the former RAPP leader Aleksei Selivanovsky, the celebrated journalist and editor of *Pravda* and *Ogonyok* Mikhail Koltsov, the poet Ilya Selvinsky. But what is remarkable, in the content of Eisenstein's article, is the presence of the aforementioned Shakespeare scholar, Sergei Dinamov. Conjecture immediately presents itself: might it not have been Dinamov—whose article "Shakespearize more!" had done so much to present an orthodox Shakespeare upon which Soviet artists could model themselves—who felt such resistance to Eisenstein's approach to history? Might not Dinamov, who insisted on a prevailing realism in the work of Shakespeare and on a Shakespearean art that could fundamentally "be in one's own time, to be within today," have taken issue with Eisenstein's inscription of a pantheistic and elemental Shakespeare into the development of Moscow? Though we do not and cannot know, we can imagine a likelihood. And another Shakespearean irony: ultimately, according to a Mosfilm report of late 1933, whether as a directive from above or in answer to the invitation that Eisenstein had extended in his essay, Eisenstein was assigned a cowriter to collaborate with him on the film's script. The writer was none other than Aleksandr Fadeev, the same early proponent of socialist realism who had championed Marx's realistic Shakespeare in the late 1920s and published his credo in the essay "Down with Schiller!"[59] This specific allocation of Fadeev to Eisenstein seems too pointed to be arbitrary, and we might imagine the discussions of how one ought properly to Shakespearize a narrative about socialist Moscow between Eisenstein and Fadeev. Notably, Eisenstein does not mention Fadeev or Dinamov in his diaries of these years; we are limited to speculation

since all trace of the project vanishes almost immediately after Fadeev joined the production.[60]

In any case, since Soviet artists had in fact been charged with a relatively straightforward task—promoting the capital city of world socialism—and given what Eisenstein had expressed of his plan to meet that challenge, the primal, gauntlet-run through Moscow's history and the city's unprecedented cinematic mutability that was to have been the result, it is not difficult to see why the editorial staff and the studio moved so immediately to purge these elements from Eisenstein's project. But for Eisenstein, even after he had to abandon the film, the project of realizing a properly dialectical time and a truly cinematic form of history would only become more urgent and would lead him to unexpected discoveries in the historical films that occupied him for the remainder of his career.

Conclusion

The Unrealized Oeuvre

Eisenstein set aside his *Moscow* project sometime in late 1934, just months before both the state-sponsored fifteenth-anniversary celebrations of Soviet cinema and the director's fateful January and February 1935 speeches, with which I opened this book. And now, at the end of the book, having examined the sequence of films that culminates with *Moscow*, having traversed this body of work that remained largely in its would-be creator's imagination, we might recall those scenes. First Eisenstein standing, exposed, on the stage of Moscow's Central House of Cinema during the All-Union Creative Conference of Soviet Cinema Workers, promising his fellow filmmakers that he would soon have real film work to show them, that he would soon emerge from his solitary "tusk" of theoretical work to marry it to the equally important tusk of practical filmmaking. And then we might recall him trembling, weeks later, on the stage of Leningrad's former Mariinsky Theatre—agitated by a lapse in memory and indulging a self-protective impulse to mask uncertainty with concrete details by announcing to the audience (prematurely, as he afterward felt) the title of his next film.

Clearly, *Bezhin Meadow*—that next film—was meant by Eisenstein to somehow act as a restorative, to renew his colleagues' faith in him, to resuscitate his image before political and industry leadership, to return him to his former place as the Soviet Union's master of cinema. We can

only conjecture, then, how much and in what ways he expected it to be an achievably completable film, and how he would have hoped that in undertaking it he might, for example, avoid the impossible visual and conceptual demands of *Glass House* or *Capital*, how he might mitigate the intensity of psychological exploration that ran *Sutter's Gold* and *An American Tragedy* afoul of their studios, how he might suppress the urge to play with Russian past and present that seems to have sunk both *MMM* and *Moscow*.

From the text of Eisenstein's two speeches, it is clear that he understood the existential seriousness of his position: it was paramount that he break the cycle of unrealized labor in which he had found himself and that he complete his next film successfully; failure to do so could easily have meant the end of his filmmaking career. It could also have meant something worse: party purges of various types, show trials, and seemingly arbitrary arrests were becoming commonplace through the early 1930s—and in early 1935, after the December 1934 assassination of the Politburo member Sergei Kirov, and the rash of trials, executions, and other reprisals that followed in the subsequent weeks, the mood was decidedly perilous. Within the film industry, which could only reflect the trend in Soviet society at large, political repression was no longer simply a matter of party lines and deviations, of drafts and revisions, or of approvals and disapprovals, but also of life and death.

Bezhin Meadow: Absence and the Imaginary

The tragic story of *Bezhin Meadow* has been told in many ways. Its artistic-political burdens, the public fanfare with which it emerged, the labyrinths of its production history, its suppression, and its utter decimation—all these feature in sources from limited firsthand accounts by participants to historical analyses decades after the fact.[1] But the *complete* story of *Bezhin Meadow*, the unrealized project, with a full view of its archival vestiges, an unfurling of the creative tendencies Eisenstein pursued, and a thorough consideration of its intended form(s) would be so vast as to demand its own monograph. An undertaking like this, for reasons of both volume and theoretical clarity, is beyond the scope of this study. Moreover, unlike the unrealized projects I have discussed in the body of this book, with *Bezhin Meadow* Eisenstein had taken far more decisive steps toward the incarnation of the project—which is to say, here, he created a wealth of cinema images on film in a way he was never able to when working on those other projects. *Bezhin Meadow*, in

fact, *was* made, or was at least in part. And yet, through the vicissitudes of politics and history, this footage, which some claimed to be brilliant, and others claimed to be nearly treasonous, is absent.

The film was halted midproduction in 1937, and its materials were suppressed and prevented from duplication or exhibition; only a few years later, its negatives and incidental prints were all purportedly destroyed during Mosfilm's evacuation amid the German bombardment of late 1941. In fact, that they were totally destroyed did not turn out to be the case, as we will see; nevertheless, we can frame the phenomenon of *Bezhin Meadow* thus: the film, which once at least partially existed, is now nearly nonexistent. The *Bezhin Meadow* species of absence is distinct from the kind that constitutes the projects discussed in this book—those not even partially filmed and thus only existing in the imagination. Nevertheless, the film is unavoidably relevant within the arc of Eisenstein's unfinished oeuvre, and some particulars of the project's history accentuate the poignancy of the unfinished film (of any category) for those who must encounter its incompleteness. For these reasons, I have chosen to consider aspects of the film's convoluted production and exhibition history to close this book's narrative and to anchor my concluding observations.

As I noted in the introduction, Eisenstein's later regret over having given in to the impulse to announce the title of a new project in front of an audience was at least partially rooted in superstition: by occupational tradition, a filmmaker ought, when dealing with the public, to use a working title in place of the actual title. But not only was Eisenstein rashly revealing the proper name to his future project, he was also providing one that would surely have elicited very specific expectations from his listeners—Ivan Turgenev's short story "Bezhin Meadow," from his collection *Notes of a Hunter*, was a very well-known literary property, an emblematic representation of rural Russia, and something that almost every secondary-level schoolchild would have read. The question of what Eisenstein would do with this Russian literary classic must have made the surprise announcement even more intriguing to his listeners. Late that night, Eisenstein sent a telegram back to Moscow to Aleksandr Rzheshevsky, who, as the scriptwriter for the project, was seemingly the only other person aware that Eisenstein might be considering committing to direct it, to describe the response in the auditorium to his *Bezhin Meadow* announcement as an "unheard-of ovation."[2]

Rzheshevsky, whose concept it had been for the film to cross the setting and mood of Turgenev's 1851 story with the purportedly true and

very recent tale of Pavlik Morozov, the Young Pioneer martyr who was murdered by his family for denouncing the criminal activities of his anti-Bolshevik father, was among those most surprised by Eisenstein's announcement. According to his memoirs, he had thought the terms of their possible collaboration far from secure and had been, in his own dealings with the project, operating in confidence.[3] The upper administration of the Soviet film industry also seems to have been discomfited by the unexpected announcement, as Eisenstein reported days later to Rzheshevsky, citing the physical reaction of industry head Boris Shumiatsky, who had been in attendance at the Leningrad event. One can sense the high-wire thrill in Eisenstein's words to Rzheshevsky: "You should have seen Shumiatsky's face when I made the announcement!"[4] The surprise at the brash disclosure of the plan to make *Bezhin Meadow*, a surprise that seemed shared by all involved, from industry leader to collaborator to Eisenstein himself (his memoir emphasizes this), suggests that the film was imagined by the director as a solution to his chronic incompletion before it was ever properly imagined as a film.

But after this initial announcement on 3 February 1935, regardless of whether ground had been cautiously laid for the project, a series of public reports about the film began to appear, further nudging Eisenstein's *Bezhin Meadow* into the realm of the real: just two days later, on 5 February, two of the Soviet Union's top newspapers had already pounced on the story, with *Izvestia* running an interview with Rzheshevsky and *Komsomolskaya Pravda* running one with Eisenstein.[5] On 10 February, the cinema trade paper *Kino* reported on the events of the celebratory evening in Leningrad and allotted a few column inches to the conclusion of Eisenstein's speech, in which he explains the brilliance of Rzheshevsky's script, the twofold premise of its concept (the Turgenev setting and the Pavlik Morozov story), and the thematic elements that he planned to emphasize in his direction.[6] The project's movement toward actual production was no less speedy and, by mid-March the script had been read in front of studio and state committees, with the prospective filmmakers subsequently furnished with a short list of concrete improvements that would be necessary in their next script drafts. By mid-April, the film had been officially accepted for production by Mosfilm, and in May the approval to proceed had been granted by the Main Directorate of the Soviet cinema industry (GUKF).[7]

The same month, Eisenstein and Rzheshevsky embarked on alterations to the script, and the director began detailed searches for actors

and locations. After auditioning thousands of young boys, Eisenstein found his ideal young martyr in an eleven-year-old nonactor named Vitka Kartashov; the role of the murderous father was given to Boris Zakhava, the renowned actor of the Vakhtangov theater. Scores of small roles and background actors were cast. All the while, as might be expected, Eisenstein engaged in his customary imaginative labor, producing hundreds of drawings for the envisioned film. Jay Leyda, then an apprentice director on the production, describes them: "The stream of drawings, which was a normal part of all his thinking and private conversation, had turned into a flood in this period of preparation. There were sketches for all purposes. . . . I have seen more than one filming day pass without E. referring once to the script—so reliant is he on the firm mental images he keeps with him."[8]

But, unlike so much of his imaginary work of the previous decade, here Eisenstein had the pleasure of immediately making the leap from such mental and graphic images to film images. By summer, shooting had begun; the hastily assembled crew would shoot footage outside Moscow, in Rostov, in Kharkiv, and as far afield as Armenia. Filming proceeded quickly and ahead of schedule. There was hope that the film might even appear on screens before the end of the year.[9] During this brief and intense period of production, it is clear from all accounts that Eisenstein worked with a focus, verve, and inspiration that, as we may readily imagine, he had not been able to access in previous years. One can only imagine his relief and thrill as he pressed forward swiftly and meaningfully, working, as he would have it, within the tusk of practical film production; as summer 1935 closed, a fully completed film already loomed, it seemed, not so far in the distance. But in September, with nearly three-quarters of the film completed, Eisenstein contracted smallpox and was forced to shut down production for two months.[10]

In this period of Eisenstein's required convalescence, implacable fate stepped in. Shumiatsky and other administrators from GUKF screened the filmed footage and found its political angle to be "distorted," and Eisenstein's interpretation of the material to be overly "biblical," "mystical," and "implausible."[11] In the name of eliminating and avoiding all incorrect interpretation, they called for a full halt to production, a total reworking of Eisenstein's approach to the material, an adjustment to the script's dialogues and scene structures, even a recasting of some of the main actors. Leaders at Mosfilm such as Boris Babitsky attempted to defend the production, allowing Eisenstein to continue shooting into the beginning of 1936 according to his original plans.

Figure 12.1. Eisenstein and actors preparing a scene for *Bezhin Meadow*, 1937. Photograph: Dmitrii Debabov. Associated Press. Used with permission.

But by May of that year, after more communication between the studio and GUKF, Mosfilm had capitulated and prepared a sixteen-page document detailing the defects of the film as it had been shot to that point, and effectively informing the production team that they would need to start over.[12]

Eisenstein had no choice but to obey, even though his internal turmoil over the lost labor was intense—this much is clear from his diary.[13] Rzheshevsky's script effectively vanished beneath revisions, and a new version of the film was written in collaboration between Eisenstein and Isaac Babel. The production was given permission to begin again in a limited format and with closer oversight. Shooting resumed in Yalta in autumn 1936, but in November Shumiatsky and his aides at GUKF held a mandatory screening of the new material and produced a new document listing the many interpretive errors that persisted in the new version.[14] And, although Eisenstein continued to film the picture's remaining episodes into 1937, the ultimate termination of the film seems already to have been accomplished.

On 5 March, Shumiatsky showed members of the Central Committee some footage from the film, and as a result, the Politburo adopted a resolution that the film should be banned.[15] Shortly after, on 17 March, Shumiatsky made the halting of *Bezhin Meadow* official, and

went on—with an air of vengeance and perhaps of self-preservation—to publicly announce the stoppage of the film in his condemnatory article "On the Film *Bezhin Meadow*" in the 19 March issue of *Pravda*.[16] In mid-April, Eisenstein was compelled to publish in *Sovetskoe iskusstvo* a public expiation, his self-criticism "The Mistakes of *Bezhin Meadow*," where, writing about the project already in the past tense, he acknowledged his aesthetic tendency to generalize, and his consequent immersion in subjectivity, his detachment from (in this case, Soviet) reality.[17]

The public denunciation of Eisenstein and the work he had so far made toward *Bezhin Meadow* initiated a well-documented campaign of criticism against Eisenstein and his partially filmed project in the Soviet press. This journalistic pillorying was augmented by public meetings at film organizations across the country, in which discussions of the various faults of Eisenstein's banned film were held; all the while, the order to efface the very existence of the film (*ego smyt'*) was being carried out. Taken together with the various stages of oversight, censure, and prohibition already detailed, the written and oral debates over the crimes and errors of the film act as a dark irony to the subject of Eisenstein's imaginary cinema: in each case, the viewers of Eisenstein's unfinished work were contending with their own imagination of the still-distant finished work (only in some cases was this imagination facilitated by limited glimpses of footage prepared without the filmmakers' involvement).

The phenomenon of the imaginary *Bezhin Meadow* is perhaps most forcefully notable in the public meetings devoted to the film, where the debates about the failures of Eisenstein's work seem to have raged most hotly. There, none of the participants apart from Shumiatsky and a few fellow industry officials had seen even the existing parts of Eisenstein's still unfinished film—after all, its exhibition had already been prohibited by the nation's top authority, and some believe the footage might already have been destroyed by this time.[18] Perhaps those discussing the film had read descriptions of the production in the press, or had heard reports from those who had seen some footage and ultimately blocked the film. Perhaps they had access to portions of Rzheshevsky's or Babel's scripts. But it is certain that the overwhelming majority of those involved at these meetings had encountered no image, no sound, no montage—*Bezhin Meadow*, as a film, could only have existed in their imagination. On the one hand, we have what had been anticipated of the film, and on the other we have the reported dangers of its content, the sophistry of its formalism; in either case, the discussion must be

pictured with all sides struggling to conjure or to view a demonized film that was purported to exist, and with certain provocative qualities, but that was emphatically not present.

Such cinematic conjecture of how the filmed footage might have appeared would have seemed to have been the eternal fate of *Bezhin Meadow*'s reception—given the ultimate destruction of its negatives and prints. Later researchers would have had a wealth of hearsay on the film to study from the Soviet press of 1935–37 but, as with most of Eisenstein's unfinished films, the only material trace we would have had of the project itself would have been in archival documents. With time, however, this type of imagination of *Bezhin Meadow*'s cinematic instantiation was augmented by the revelation of *actual* images from the film's production that allow us a clear vision of its textures and spaces. First, surviving set images made by photographers Jay Leyda (the future film historian worked on the film as an apprentice to Eisenstein) and Dmitrii Debabov began to appear in the next decades in print and in exhibition.[19] Eisenstein's meticulous casting and *typage*, the physical complexity of his compositions, the directness of his camera setups, and the thoroughness of his rehearsal practices are all apparent, if obliquely so, in these images. But the most remarkable visual relic of *Bezhin Meadow* is the collection of stills, cut surreptitiously by Eisenstein's editor Esfir' Tobak from the 1936 workprint reels that would soon be confiscated. When they had caught wind of the prohibition of the first variant of the film, Tobak, on Eisenstein's direct instructions, sliced more than twelve hundred individual stills from the one existing print, attempting to preserve characteristic frames from all available footage.[20] What she managed to save (she did not succeed in performing this dangerous preservation on all the filmed reels) was put into a box and secretly passed to Eisenstein and then preserved by Pera Atasheva after his death. Atasheva revealed them to researchers in the 1960s when Eisenstein's holdings began to be processed for preservation; they are now housed in Eisenstein's files at the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art.[21]

No doubt the most intriguing results of the emergence of these salvaged frames—and a notable instance of the imagination of the unfinished—appeared in 1967, when Sergei Yutkevich and Naum Kleiman, both heavily involved in the processing of Eisenstein's archival holdings and the preparation of what would later become his *Selected Works*, produced from these stills a reconstruction of the film. At twenty-six minutes, their version of *Bezhin Meadow* places Eisenstein's

frames in a legible narrative order, using Rzheshevsky's screenplay and the director's shooting script as guides, convincingly recreating something of the narrative-visual flow that the intended film might have had. And indeed, this 1967 version is a revelation. One feels the arc of patriotism, martyrdom, and hagiography in the Pavlik Morozov story line; the suggestion of Turgenev's moods and locations in the landscapes and setups; Eisenstein's alternating compositions with tense, deeply contrasting dark and light tones and then sudden bursts of dynamic action. Built from the images Eisenstein actually produced, Yutkevich and Kleiman's reconstruction is a treasure of concrete suggestion, a plausible if diminished shadow of the film the director had hoped to one day show. But by no means is it Eisenstein's *Bezhin Meadow*.

When presenting the reconstruction of *Bezhin Meadow* to students at VGIK in 1996, Kleiman emphasized that what he was showing was not in any way Eisenstein's film, that it was not even a film per se, but that it was a "*photofilm*." In this version, Kleiman explains, despite its effect of reconstruction, the actual intention was not to reconstruct Eisenstein's original but to rehabilitate it, to "return the film to the history of cinema, to at least imagine its visuals." He then provides the fascinating summation that "it was more a fantasy on the theme of a lost film."[22] Kleiman's language here makes evident that the task of his project with Yutkevich was unambiguous. Certainly, they were working with somewhat more concrete materials, but the overwhelming impression of the work arose from that which was still missing: the movement, the montage, the seal of authorship. In the face of this absence, it was necessary for the rehabilitating filmmakers to intervene. No montage had survived, so they had to make their own decisions for when and how to alternate shots; no sound survived, so they had to produce and insert a series of intertitles; no music survived, so they had to use selections of Prokofiev's film scores in place of what Gavriil Popov had composed for the film.

The effect, despite the thrill of seeing the preserved images, is a *Bezhin Meadow* that is still, mute, archival, a strangely silent film with intertitles—all things that Eisenstein's film was distinctly not. We recognize Kleiman and Yutkevich's realization of *Bezhin Meadow* as a distinct maneuver within the realm of the imaginary cinema: not the "peculiar projection" of a finished film that Eisenstein describes preproduction material manifesting in the observer's mind, but instead the arrangement of concrete filmed images into concrete montage arrangements, underwritten by the acknowledgment of the myriad missing pieces.

The absence of those pieces reminds the viewer that they are at a halfway point, the reconstruction detains the viewer in a position of continual imagination, required to engage their cinematic fantasies as proxy for the absent material. The added layer of labor and specificity that these film-frame relics of *Bezhin Meadow* afford demonstrates clearly the distinction between the open and infinite process of imagining *that which never was* and the fraught, semidetermined process of imagining—from the few traces it leaves behind—*that which once was but is no longer*.

Although the unfinished in its various appearances would continue to trouble Eisenstein until his death, *Bezhin Meadow* is a fitting place to conclude this analysis of the director's unrealized works. After all, the film's remarkable failure was the final one in the intensely prolonged period between 1927 and 1938 in which all Eisenstein's projects miscarried; his next one would emphatically not fail. Even though Shumiatsky, Babitsky, and others officially tasked with managing the production of *Bezhin Meadow* were arrested (and eventually executed) within months of the film's cancellation, Eisenstein was spared. The director's reprieve came from the highest levels: in May 1937 correspondence between members of the Central Committee, Stalin sought input from his advisers on what to do with Eisenstein. Kaganovich argued that the director was antisocialist and that, if given another project, he would again simply waste millions and have nothing to show at the end of it. But Molotov proposed using the director again—though, necessarily, he advised adjusting the ways in which control was exerted over his work. Voroshilov and Zhdanov voted with Molotov, and Eisenstein was allowed to continue working.[23] He began considering a small number of possible projects, and by summer 1937 he had settled into preproduction work on *Alexander Nevsky*—a film he would finish, a film that would become an immediate popular sensation, would receive worldwide distribution, and would return him, at least temporarily, to the good graces of the Soviet film establishment and of Stalin's government: he was awarded the Soviet Union's highest civilian honor, the Order of Lenin, for the film in 1939.

Counting the Unrealized on the Same Level as the Realized

Eisenstein's engagement with the *Alexander Nevsky* project inaugurated what most film historians of the latter twentieth century consider the director's late period, a decade or so of creative activity in which he produced that film, a staging of Wagner's *Die Walküre* in the Bolshoi

Theatre (it premiered in November 1940), and *Ivan the Terrible* (its first two installments and parts of its third). Through this decade he also led regular courses at VGIK, developed plans for several additional projects, and composed theory and history at a stunning clip with (the bulk of) *Method*, *Nonindifferent Nature*, *Notes for a General History of Cinema*, and more. In the study of Eisenstein, one of the prevailing modes of analysis of the director's biography has been to insist on the distinctness of this working period, to set it off from the early years of Eisenstein's remarkable productivity in the 1920s.

This bifurcated view of Eisenstein's career is inevitably abetted by the near decade of incompletion (and the subsequent impression of silence it tends to impart) that intervenes between the putative early and the late Eisenstein. The ten-year gap tends to highlight what appear to be wide aesthetic and philosophical differences between the two periods, and even insinuates the occurrence of some sort of schismatic moment: at the very least, the resulting aesthetic system contains within itself a huge degree of incommensurability. Typical of this approach is the view expressed by Peter Wollen, who, in a 1999 issue of *October*, pitted "Eisenstein, the Constructivist and semiologist versus the Wagnerian and symbolist."[24] Similar positions have been especially prevalent in Western scholarship and, as some have suggested, may be rooted in the biases of midcentury leftist film practitioners and critics who preferred the outright revolutionary politic of the early films and saw in the latter ones a reactionary collaborationist tendency. As we saw in chapter 6, we may observe the director contending with the feeling of personal bifurcation in his own way as early as 1933, with the fragmented personae of writer and director at the helm of *MMM*. A drawing he made for the director's notes of that film demonstrates—as the unified filmmaker appears divided, for one occupation as one person, for the other occupation as someone else—how a subtle shift in orientation communicates a vast difference in position and performance.

Indeed, leaping from *The General Line* to *Alexander Nevsky*, one cannot ignore the existence of certain seeming rifts that open for Eisenstein at *some point* between the late 1920s and 1930s. On a formal level, the role of montage has drastically altered, slowed, turned inward toward the depth of the frame, while sound has complicated the movement of entire scenes and sections; furthermore, a major shift in outward thematic tendency is evident, a movement from the mass proletarian hero to the outsize historical individual, something that seems to be perhaps not merely the result of political trauma and the demands of

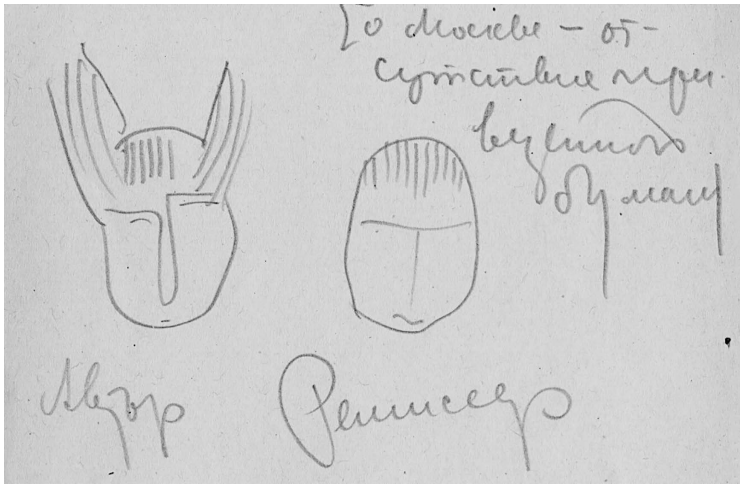


Figure 12.2. Eisenstein's drawing of himself in two different forms (as writer and as director). RGALI 1923-2-185, 60. Used with permission.

socialist realism. Such breaks are even supported by major physical shifts in Eisenstein's person (his weight, his visible age), perhaps most poignantly expressed by the telling biographical detail that, after 1935, the slant of his handwriting appears to have moved predominantly from left to right.[25]

And yet, less dichotomized interpretations of Eisenstein's opus have long been present in the writings of Russian and Russophone scholars such as Naum Kleiman, Leonid Kozlov, Mikhail Iampolski, and others. These scholars have preferred to discover throughlines and gradual shifts within Eisenstein's creative biography, often by analyzing the films against the index of his copious conceptual writing. By and large, this scholarship operates on a model of Eisensteinian dialectics that is shown merely to shift from one focused on disjuncture and collision to one focused on synthesis—a model that still more or less governs the field today. Similarly, in his landmark study of Eisenstein's technique, Jacques Aumont addressed such "complexities and idiosyncrasies of the Eisensteinian opus" by adopting an evolution-based approach and moving beyond the idea of a simple dichotomy separating the early and the late Eisenstein and toward the notion that the "extreme diversity of his work, his many different interests and talents and, above all, the ceaseless transformation of his conceptual system . . . might lead (and has often led) to the legitimate conclusion that there are *several Eisensteins*."[26]

A similar approach can be found in theoretical constructs such as Oksana Bulgakowa's "Evolving Eisenstein," which posits at least three conceptual lenses for scholars to shuttle between in the attempt to apprehend the director's variegated work, or in David Bordwell's more technically driven dissection of the mise-en-scène of Eisenstein films from both periods and his proposal that what seems markedly different may actually be viewed as a subtle evolution in method.[27] More recent Eisenstein scholars such as Julia Vassilieva, Luka Arsenjuk, and Joan Neuberger have pointed to the unprofitability of concerns for unity and rupture within the Eisenstein oeuvre, particularly because the director himself took pains to dismantle what he considered to be a simplistic conception of unity in favor of a dynamic and dialectical version of the same (one always couched in processual terms).[28] Leonid Kozlov has qualified this process of attainment in terms of correlation (and often the attempt to correlate the incommensurable), an operation that he describes as *the* principle of Eisensteinian aesthetics: "governing all, present in all, not knowing a single exception."[29]

Perhaps no writer has been more concerned with these outward features of his cinematic oeuvre than Eisenstein himself. In a chapter of *Method* known as "The Author and His Theme," written in 1943, Eisenstein surveys the first twenty years of his professional creative activity, confronting the question of unity (or seeming lack of such) across that working career, and claims with perhaps only minimal irony that unity—as a creative principle, a thematic thread, a biographical concern—has always been the prime object of his work, but that, crucially, the object itself (unity) is not what governs the larger picture but rather the process of its coming into being, "the attainment (*dostizhenie*) of unity."[30] Similarly, in 1925, in the unpublished essay "Twenty Years Later," written on the twentieth anniversary of *Battleship Potemkin*'s release, Eisenstein continued to face what he conceded were the "plainly incompatible and incommensurable" facets of his schematic early and late periods: from collective to individual, from the overthrow of imperial power to its establishment, and so on. And, in both instances in which Eisenstein considers these questions of oeuvre, he places an unmistakable emphasis on the role of the unfinished and the unrealized.

In "The Author and His Theme," almost all the close analysis he performs to understand the gap between his early and his late work is of the unfinished projects: the screenplays written in America, the miles of footage shot in Mexico, his aborted 1939 plan to shoot a film at the Great Fergana Canal in Central Asia. In doing so, Eisenstein explicitly

states his task: to consider his "opus as a whole (at any rate, the part of it that was either realized or imagined)."[31] And perhaps even more unequivocally, in "Twenty Years Later," he states that in conceiving of his body of work, his approach is "counting the unrealized on the same level as that of the fully realized."[32] In this way, the unrealized projects may be seen to act for the director as a kind of land bridge spanning the disparate territories of his canon, and, of course, this priority placed on the unrealized testifies again to the importance of process over result in the productive system. We recall from chapter 1 of this book that Eisenstein characterized one of his tendencies to incompletion as the urge to "peer inside processes."

My study of Eisenstein's incomplete films has been performed with these ideas as guiding principles. I have attempted to view each member of this obscure set, and not only to consider them for the fascinating particularity of their individual features but also to see the individual imagined film in conjunction with the others categorically like it—indeed, to see the unfinished work as a whole. As much as this approach may teach us about the unfinished film as such, it also provides a workable path through the spaces of seeming canonic incommensurability just outlined. The chronological, formal, and theoretical proximities between certain of these unrealized projects demonstrate phases in the development of the director's cinematic thought on questions of optics, intellectual montage, interior monologue, the collective and the individual, the comedic, history, and much else. By virtue of their unfinished status, these works each contain elements of formation and methods and ideas coming into being, and this rawness allows for an even clearer view of a cinema in transition. Unities and disunities of the director's oeuvre uncoil; persistent themes find their variations.

In each of the three main parts of the book, I have taken two unrealized projects in tandem, and, having paired them this way, I have indicated how the projects' fundamental concerns often take the format of oppositional concepts—the ideal pitted against the material, the objective against the subjective, the sequential against the simultaneous. In a straightforward sense, we see the projects performing their oppositions dialectically, productively, generating new cinematic material and technique while signposting points of significance within Eisenstein's intellectual and artistic evolution.

The general oppositional relationship between the ideal and the material constitutes the screen on which *Glass House* and *Capital* were

projected. This is, of course, an appropriate context for Eisenstein's purest attempts at a historical materialist cinema, one that endeavored to manifest the Marxian tenet that human thought is the reflection of the material world. With *Glass House*, we saw a specific material (in all its historical and economic complexity) as the main, exhaustive concept of a film project and observed how, for Eisenstein, glass, as a material form, with all its physical properties, was both infinitely suggestive of cinematic possibility and maddeningly elusive as a basis for a workable, thinkable story. When paired with *Capital*, the difficulty of instantiating the material world in expressible thought met its inverse: the difficulty of incarnating thought in a material medium. In both cases, the director's dilemma was the additional step that cinema requires after philosophy has finished its work; while materialist and idealist thinkers may debate the primacy of idea over material or material over idea, the filmmaker must stage this debate (itself an idea) in the materials of the phenomenal world, even if the object of representation was meant, explicitly, to be a "concept."

In this sense, the very basis of the two projects appears now, from a historical distance, to be fundamentally utopian in its conception. For the purposes of the study of Eisenstein's imaginary cinema, however, they prove a fruitful starting point: the tension between the ideal and the material may also be seen as nothing other than a metaphor for our understanding of the unrealized and the realized film and the relationship between the two—as the one is meant, in the best cases, to slowly move from its ideal, imaginary state to become the other, an instance of material, cinematic culture. Here Eisenstein explored new compositional techniques—drastically new relationships to depth of field, innovative subjectivities produced from optical deformation (based on lens distortion, light manipulation, and shadow play), and an unprecedented amount of preproduction consideration of the material world (costumes, sets) of the film. Along with this, we may observe a refinement of the director's conception of montage, one in which, on the one hand, with *Glass House*, the cut no longer seems to determine meaning, and viewers must look for layered dialectical procedures occurring within the frame; on the other hand, in *Capital*, the director strives to synthesize material objects and their movements in processes that will lead viewers beyond the demands of story and into the realm of thought. In phrasing the innovations of these films this way, I demonstrated how the rudiments of these imagined techniques reveal an Eisenstein in motion—intentionally emerging from the proven methods

of the films of his early period and moving toward the methods that would eventually be put to use in the later period.

For *Sutter's Gold* and *An American Tragedy*, the axes of the subjective and the objective form the determining analytic ground. In both of these Hollywood projects, Eisenstein approached one of the fundamental difficulties of cinematic expression (a slight, practical variation on the ideal/material opposition): the struggle to demonstrate human interiority through human exteriority, to move internal life into the phenomenal world. In these film projects, both centered on tragic heroes, we see Eisenstein's predilection for the return of pathos. The question of human thought is no longer just about its reflection of the material world; now thought is shown yoked to emotional affect and psychology. In *Sutter's Gold*, we saw Eisenstein searching for the possible value of musical structures (leitmotif, fugue, orchestra) as a framework for cinema's emotional and thematic structure; we also saw him exploiting the new possibilities of film audio as a platform on which to present the subjective inner world of his central character and shade the tonalities of the film's narrative. In *An American Tragedy*, we see these investigations continue, but with the additional signifying complication that the disclosure of the character's subjectivity (Clyde's interior monologue in the case of his decision to murder Roberta) becomes powerful enough to influence the audience's understanding of the tragic plot, activating a mechanism by which the burden of tragic responsibility shifts to the scale of socioeconomic and historical forces. Here too, the subjective-objective opposition reframes the basic dilemma of the unrealized film: the imagined film exists subjectively, in the mind, with infinite undetermined cinematic force, but it strives always to be born into a phenomenal world that is limited by the objective senses.

With these film projects and their emphasis on the psychological processes experienced by individuals, Eisenstein moves definitively away from the cinema, of the collective hero, the cinema of *typage*, episodic-attraction cinema, and to a plot-heavy cinema concerned with larger-than-life figures—the defining features of both his unrealized works of the 1930s and of his late films, *Alexander Nevsky* and *Ivan the Terrible*. This progression is the clearest instance within the corpus of the director's unrealized films of an incremental shift from one set of projects to another that diminishes the seeming gap between early and late Eisenstein. Without the development in these projects of techniques for blending the objective and subjective worlds of their characters, this

movement to the monumental character would not have been nearly so viable.

And, finally, there are the opposing concepts of sequentiality and simultaneity—time-based considerations that complicate as much about montage as they do about history. In both *MMM* and *Moscow*, Eisenstein's approach to history, a construct in which sequence dominates, was to probe the incrementation of its narratives for the possibility of collapse. Both films are built around the prospect of bringing incommensurate points of history into contact, of eliding the distance between the remote past, for example, and the present. In *MMM*, this is accomplished through narrative conceit: an implausible and comedic case of figures from medieval artwork coming to life amid the problematic realities of 1933 Moscow. Here, as that which had been sequential is made literally simultaneous, the results are absurd and skeptical, as damning of the superstitions and prejudices of the past as they are of the folly pervading Soviet daily life. *Moscow*, however, makes historical sequence conceptually simultaneous as elemental imagery connects scenes that were to occur in disparate centuries: continuous panning shots are planned across space that first depicts one era and then another, and actors are cast to play similar or genetically related characters from historical juncture to historical juncture.

On the one hand, the copresence of multiple eras in these imaginary films mirrors Eisenstein's growing interest in theories of primal thought and what would soon be his expressed conviction that aesthetic experience required an intermingling of prelogical thought (a vestige of prehistory) and advanced, logical thought. On the other, it simulates the montage filmstrip that joins incongruous images and times in one continuous flow, and where, at the cut, briefly, the sensation of simultaneity pervades the edit—but here, it represents an ontological leap, an aestheticization of "the history of mankind," the past pervading the present and the present determining the past. The projects also reveal a softening of Eisenstein's dialectic in these films—in *MMM*, he presents a comedic dialectic, static and satirical in its amusing banality; in *Moscow*, the dialectic is fluid and mutable, the product of a desire to meld a sequence of revolutionary moments into an eternal national history. And, perhaps most notably, the shift in Eisenstein's focus (so observable in the previous section) toward the monumentality of the individual hero and his psychology is now given the apparatus of a present-oriented history. From here, the leap to the late films' depiction of Alexander Nevsky and Ivan the Terrible becomes perfectly foreseeable.

The groundwork has been laid for the meaning that their historical narratives cast—unequivocally, but somehow still mysteriously—onto the present.

Between Finitude and Infinity

The passage of prominent ideas from the early to the late Eisenstein comes into view as one moves through a survey of the unrealized projects, as these flickering objects are made to move in conversation with one another, and especially when that conversation is marked by the sort of dialectical productivity that was so often a hallmark of Eisenstein's thinking. But in such a survey we may see with equal force—suspended in the balance between such conflicting, even antithetical, poles as I have proposed in this book—the presence of a kind of impossibility that emanates from deep within the genetics of these projects. These impossibilities are productive, but they must be seen as prohibitive too; this is undeniable, in light of the failures of these projects. Indeed, there are finite, concrete reasons why these projects did not succeed.

With *Glass House*, we saw that Eisenstein ultimately was unable to find a compelling story to stage within the all-seeing glass edifice that had been the structure for his imagined film. In that instance, the material (glass) was the presiding substance of the film's concept, and when no story came, it was evident that the infinite possibilities of transparency were not enough to sell a script. With *Capital*, similarly, the concept was perhaps too cerebral (as was its explicit intent) and, despite its buttressing with ideas for innovative narrative structures and clever rhetorical operations, the prospect of the director sitting down to write a full studio treatment or a shooting script of *Capital* still strikes one, even after studying the brilliant notes Eisenstein made for the project, as somewhat fantastic. But perhaps more meaningfully, Eisenstein was daring to openly interpret Marx and historical materialism, the province not of artists but of the expert and of the powerful. The possibility that he set the project aside at the suggestion of Stalin seems, if not likely, then at least plausible.

The failures of *Sutter's Gold* and *An American Tragedy* can most immediately be chalked up to American studio evasiveness—and the puerile but familiar pretext that, despite a script's undeniable high quality, it does not offer the consuming public what it desires. Such may have been the explanation (along with budgetary concerns) from studio

executives, but it is also clear that Eisenstein's dissection of the American capitalist system (its history in the first film and its recent past in the second film) and the mechanisms of tragic fate it brings to bear on individuals was somewhat unsavory to those making decisions at Paramount; this, taken together with real political opposition to Russians in Hollywood, effectively smothered any possibility of the films being produced.

At home again, Eisenstein seems to have supremely misjudged the sociopolitical context into which he intended to introduce *MMM*. Despite its many formal innovations as a comedy, in its conception it seems more native to the late NEP era when satirical comedies like it (by Mayakovsky, Bulgakov, Erdman) were still being made. The suddenness of the project's abandonment and the suppression of it within Eisenstein's own recollections suggests a sudden realization of the project's potential dangers. And, similarly, in *Moscow* we can see the director devising virtuosic new approaches to the formal depiction of history, but they are approaches that are painfully out of step with the dominant modes of a newly hegemonic Stalinist society and the ascendant style that was its artistic embodiment.

From today's historical perspective, one is tempted to say that the failure of these projects is no surprise at all: Weren't all these projects fated to incompletion from their inception? Conversely, might we not argue that to judge why any project did or did not reach fruition—while others did—is to tangle with so much contingency and surmise as to be worth only a brief pause, and that primarily in order to recognize the patterns that persist across the objects at hand?

The far more compelling question is that of inherent impossibility, of the relationship to the unfinished as a permeating factor of a creative system and of the unfinished as a distinct and integral genre within the oeuvre of a filmmaker like Eisenstein. Might we even propose that the impasse evident in the conceptual rudiments of the projects discussed in this book are not outliers, but are, on the contrary, symptomatic of inherent impossibilities within cinema itself or creation itself? Might not the abstractions of conceptual thinking (and of dialectical thought in particular) be unrepresentable visually, even in a world defined by its unparalleled overthrow of the visual realm? Might not the glimmer of subjectivity evinced by film's unique use of audiovisual counterpoint be just another shadow of an incoherent objective reality? Might the temporality of cinematic montage be completely at odds with the temporality of history or of narrative?

In fact, it would be foolish to argue that only Eisenstein's unrealized projects, and none of his completed films, demonstrates specifically this presence of the impossible, or the utopian, or the contradictory. If it was historical vicissitude that doomed some projects to incompletion, it was the same historical vicissitude that bestowed completion on others. What seems unmistakable is that somewhere in the fundamental working process of Eisenstein resides a natural tendency toward a type of thinking or a mode of creative practice in which impossibility or incompletion exists as both potential outcome and catalytic influence.

If we recall Eisenstein's conception of the screenplay—an aesthetically complete screenplay—as something that must be seen as intentionally incomplete because of the space it allows a director to translate its verbal material to the optical incarnation of the screen, we can see how that which remains fragmentary and unfinished becomes productive in its encounter with other constitutive elements of cinema. Eisenstein often thought through his theoretical issues while in the process of composition, resolving them either in part or in full, a tendency observed by Russian anthropologist Aleksandr Kozintsev, who has theorized that Eisenstein's "very method of creation bears the imprint of a theory, the main determinant of which is the 'draft,' *a dialectical unpreparedness*, the simultaneous qualities of evenness and unevenness in a work that is itself in the process of becoming."[33] Kozintsev rightly claims that because of this simultaneity of practical composition and reflection *on* that composition, such "traces of unfinishedness are preserved in the [finished] films themselves."

This insistence on the importance of the draft in Eisenstein's creative process might be particularly persuasive for those who have spent extensive time in Eisenstein's archive and seen the way the director seems to favor the infinite openness of the draft to the fixity of the finalized text. In the Russian term for *draft*, *chernovik* (which exudes the blackness of ink and graphite) and its finished counterpart *belovik* (which highlights the pristine whiteness of the page), we have a graphic instantiation of exactly the kind of alternating figures of completion and incompletion that we saw Eisenstein using earlier in this book—*chernovik* and *belovik* naturally take their place alongside the yin and yang and the odd and even of his creative cosmology. As a pair, in the close fit of their dichotomous relationship, they always describe the site of contact between the unfinished and the finished, the infinite and the finite.

I observed early in this book that Eisenstein retrospectively described the corpus of his incomplete works as a "swarm of unrealized projects."[34] I would like to return to the image of such a swarm of the unfinished, which became a constant consideration, a leitmotif, as I performed my work on Eisenstein's imaginary cinema, perhaps because of the pure animism emanating from the term and the sound of its Russian incarnation, *roi*. And, perhaps because the image connects intriguingly to other Eisensteinian concepts, this book has observed: the dynamic networks of thought meant to constitute his *Capital* project, the free infinite optical correlation that was to take place in *Glass House*, the clusters of historical synchronicity in the films of the 1930s, and, perhaps most obviously, in the director's vision of the spherical book, in which essays and ideas would be arranged spherically, in space, and could be perceived "with a simultaneity of perception" that would perpetually generate new interconnections.[35]

But the only other precise use of the term *swarm* that I have located in Eisenstein's writing comes at one key instance in his long essay of the 1940s on Disney, in which he describes the free, "plasmatic" movement of fire in Gorky's short fiction.[36] There, the "endlessly varied figures of fire" are shown metaphorically taking the form of diverse animals (bears, finches, squirrels, red beasts, wide-winged birds, etc.) as they swiftly consume the forest.[37] Eisenstein, after relating this passage, says, "let's allow this swarm [*roi*] of animals to take us back to Disney. . ."[38] And then, somewhat further in the essay, he references a film by Disney that features mosquitoes. He doesn't call it by name, but based on what he describes, it is undoubtedly the 1934 short *Camping Out*. He writes, "Mosquitoes are constantly in a swarm, where the swarm is like a general collective body. In the end they all swarm into one black blob with a shared outline that repeats the image of a single small mosquito: i.e., one giant Mosquito!!!"

It important to note that this image appears in the Disney essay just after Eisenstein has been ruminating on the possibility of imagining a self-portrait or self-incarnation in the sum of one's work, in the entire oeuvre—an idea that fascinated him at this time: the author as manifest in his theme. In the Disney swarm that so moved Eisenstein, the elements of the swarm come together into one large instantiation of its basic constitutive element. An amorphous body that may take form as its pieces come into and out of tension one with another. An infinitely motile network for combination. Somehow here we have a relationship between the part and the (at least conceptually) whole body of work.

The swarm of mosquitoes combines to form one mosquito. The whole is made literally the exact image of its part. The part *is* the whole.

Might we also attempt to see this swarm of variously unrealized works momentarily coalescing into one ultimate unfinished work? The body of work as the definitive unrealized project? An oeuvre that resists closure in the same way that the works themselves do? I have intimated that we might sense the omnipresence of death's shadow in any encounter with the unrealized. And when an artist's entire oeuvre is conceived as unfinished or unrealized, the implications are obvious. Eisenstein's accentuating his creative project's infinite position in the future, as ever his "building *to be* built"; his oeuvre, with its signifiers of the realized and the unrealized, in its broadest sense, must be conceived as one not fully built, but one moving toward *being built*.[39] Perhaps Eisenstein's entire creative output is underwritten by a current of the incomplete, perhaps our understanding of his oeuvre depends on such a recognition. I have focused my analysis on one poignant ten-year period of Eisenstein's working life, but it is conceivable that another period of the director's career could be read similarly, that it might too suggest an oeuvre riddled with absence and incompletion.

For some, and for Eisenstein in particular, the creative process seems, despite any outward appearances to the contrary, to have very little to do with what we understand as the urge toward a completed text. If we recall Eisenstein's refrain about placing the unfinished on a level with the fully realized, we may also begin to consider the possibility that the functional and readable cinema of the canonical finished works is insufficient without the chaotic and infinite thrum of the unrealized. We might make recourse to the basic principle of cinematic montage: it is not the individual unit (the film, the unfinished film) that provides the productive meaning, but rather the correlation of units formerly autonomous. With this understanding, the Eisensteinian oeuvre, in all its completion and incompletion, becomes a site that has as much to say about the possibilities of process and of the productivity of impossibility. The oeuvre itself may be defined by its incompletion as an unrealized oeuvre, a sign of the very dialectic of artistic creation—in it, the unformed moves against the fully formed, the one emerges from the other, both the work and the body of work in a process of continuous formation.

Appendix

Eisenstein's Major and Minor Unrealized Works

Major Unrealized Works

In this list of Eisenstein's major unrealized works, each entry is followed by a brief list of available references. This selection of references favors original archival sources over secondary ones; however, in cases where no original archival sources are available, secondary ones have been provided.

Toward the Dictatorship [*K diktature*] (1924)

This collection is a planned series (in some places described as seven-part and in others as eight-part) about the development of the revolutionary movement in Russia. Episodes of revolutionary struggle were to have followed the progression from the story of the first underground printing press, to prominent prison breaks, to widespread strikes, to the lead-up to the October Revolution. In collaboration with other members of Proletkult, particularly Valerian Pletnev, Eisenstein began producing story materials for the ambitious cycle. The project was partially accepted for production at Goskino, where Boris Mikhin chose to produce the fifth part of the series; this would become *Strike* (1924). Because of the energy and resources the project required, and perhaps

due to newer and larger opportunities afforded by the film's eventual overwhelming success, the remaining episodes of the project were never pursued.

Reference: RGALI 1923-1-1–2

The Red Cavalry [*Konarmiia*] (1924)

In December 1924, Eisenstein worked with his assistant Grigori Alexandrov to develop a plan for a screenplay based at least partially on Isaac Babel's *Red Cavalry* stories. The archival remnants of the project (voluminous notes and several drafts of screenplays) show that Eisenstein's approach was not a straightforward transposition of literary material into cinematic material, but rather a complex adaptation meant to include both episodes from Babel's story collection and narrative pieces taken from Alexander Serafimovich's 1924 Civil War novel *Iron Flood*, as well as scenes drawn from documentary sources (interviews, essays) on the Civil War. The script materials were submitted to Sevzapkino, but the studio did not have the means to produce the film, and further work on the project was forestalled when Eisenstein was invited to make a film commemorating the 1905 revolution, the project that eventually led him to *Battleship Potemkin*.

References: RGALI 1923–1–29–31, 1923–2–160

The Year 1905 [*1905 god*] (1925)

Eisenstein was selected by a panel (consisting of Anatoly Lunacharsky, Vsevolod Meyerhold, and others) from the Central Executive Committee of the Soviet Union to be the director of an anniversary film for the twenty-year anniversary of the 1905 Russian Revolution. The commission was for an enormous spectacle, light on plot and heavy on the heroic masses, that was to have been shot all over the Soviet Union. It was to have included episodes from prominent moments of 1905: the Russo-Japanese War, the barricades of Moscow, Bloody Sunday, the massacres in Armenia, and more. In the summer of 1925, Eisenstein worked on the production of an ambitious script—by some accounts including eight hundred twenty scenes—in collaboration with screenwriter Nina Agadzhanova. When the early script materials were presented to Goskino leadership, the studio estimated the film would require two hundred fifty shooting days and would require twenty thousand extras. Early test shoots were held in March and early August, with middling results; to save the project, studio leadership required

that the crew go to Odessa to shoot a portion dealing with the mutiny of the battleship *Potemkin*. This piece of *The Year 1905* would become Eisenstein's masterpiece, and the rest of the film was never made.

Reference: RGALI 1923-1-32–35, 44, 56–61, 907, 1923-2-7, 10, 757

Benia Krik (1925)

For the second project intended to adapt the prose of Isaac Babel for the screen, the author of this work was personally involved. During the summer of 1925, when Eisenstein was staying in the dacha village of Nemchinovka working with Nina Agadzhanova on the script for *Battleship Potemkin*, he divided his days in two, dictating portions of the *1905* script to assistant Grigori Alexandrov in the morning and spending the afternoons with Babel, working on a script that aimed to bring his stories about a Jewish gangster from Odessa to the screen. The necessity of shooting portions of both films in Odessa made simultaneous production seem possible. But Eisenstein's mounting responsibilities with the production of what would become *Potemkin* and the difficulties he and his crew faced in shooting that film's Odessa portions became too demanding; as a result, the filing of the Babel script was passed to director Vladimir Vil'ner. Vil'ner's version of *Benia Krik* was released in 1926, a few months after the premiere of *Potemkin*. Babel was credited as the sole author of the scenario, despite whatever vestiges there may have been of Eisenstein's previous involvement. The script for the latter version of *Benia Krik* was published as a pamphlet, also in 1926, by Artel' Pisatelei.

References: RGALI 1923-1-29–31; 1923-2-160

The Bazaar of Lust [*Bazar pokhoti*] (1925)

Eisenstein produced a third collaborative script during the fruitful summer of 1925, in this case with Grigori Alexandrov. Since the film was not meant to be directed by either writer, was written strictly for commission, and would eventually be sold to Proletkino, the pair chose to write under the pseudonym Taras Nemchinov (after the suburban Moscow dacha village where the collaboration took place). The script follows a young, unwed woman, Mar'ia, who becomes pregnant, delivers a stillborn baby, is persecuted by her family and local church, and winds up in a brothel on the front during World War I. The script is structured in nine sections and is full of *guignol*-style violence and sensationalism: perverse priests, corpses, mob violence, brawls, excess, and

orgies. The content seems to have been arranged with a didactic end: to demonstrate the connection between a capitalist-imperialist religious morality and the social disorders of prostitution, venereal disease, and female destitution. Germany figures as the enemy, the originating point of social degeneracy: at a crucial moment in the script, German soldiers contract syphilis from infected Russian prostitutes. The final title card of the script reads, "The fight with prostitution is the fight with the bourgeoisie and its morality."

References: RGALI 1923-1-909, 1923-2-161

Dzhungo (1926)

Dzhungo was a planned collaboration with Sergei Tretiakov, who, in January 1926, had just seen the successful staging of his play *Roar China!* at the Vsevolod Meyerhold theater. Tretiakov, with whom Eisenstein had collaborated on multiple Proletkult theater productions in the earlier part of the decade, had just returned from two years spent in China, at Peking University, and was heavily invested in the growth of socialism in that country. In late 1925, Tretiakov had proposed (to Goskino) an ambitious expedition to China, to make a feature film (or series of feature films) about the development of the revolutionary movement in China. As part of this proposal, the feature film was to be reinforced by the production of several short films and reports on political and social topics—while *Dzhungo* itself was envisioned as a text that would play powerfully both to Soviet audiences and eventually to the Chinese proletariat as well. Eisenstein was to direct, Eduard Tisse was to be the camera operator, and a crew of sixteen people were to travel. Tretiakov arranged the team's ideas into a ten-page libretto that structured the film project into three long sections ("The Yellow Threat," "The Blue Express," and "China Roars"), with each section presenting a crucial stage in revolutionary China's development. The state committee deliberated for months but in the end chose not to approve the project for production because of logistical troubles and a changing political climate in China.

Reference: RGALI 1923-1-131–32

October, part II [*Oktiabr', vtoraia seriia*] (1927)

Eisenstein wrote a much larger scenario for *October* than he was able to finally shoot and edit and present as the final film. His original concept was for the narrative to have started from the February Revolution,

lead to the October Revolution (the point at which the film that would ultimately be produced would culminate), and continue through the victory of the Red Army toward the end the Civil War. Instead of simply discarding the script materials that detailed events that followed the October Revolution, in late 1927 Eisenstein moved them into a plan for a new script that was conceived as a sequel to the abbreviated version of *October* that was being produced. Many motifs from the unfilmed *Red Cavalry* made their way into this second part of *October*.

Reference: RGALI 1923-1-199

Glass House [Steklianyi dom, Glaßhaus] (1927–30)

Eisenstein worked off and on for three years on developing a film about a multistory residential building made entirely of glass, a project he began to imagine while visiting Berlin in spring 1926 and first detailed in work notebooks of 1927. *Glass House* was conceived as a satire of American social and cinematic norms and, from its genesis, was intended to be a production with an American studio. The archive preserves a wealth of director's notes, drawings, script ideas, character and scene descriptions, and research references. By far the most creatively fruitful aspect of the project was its optical expansiveness, and the possibilities of shooting multiple planes of action through visually permeable panes of glass spurred Eisenstein to produce many drawings and discrete visual plans. Eisenstein continued to work on the film up until the time he spent in Hollywood in 1930, but, despite his most strenuous efforts, he was not successful in attaching his wealth of visual material to a script with a filmable narrative.

References: RGALI 1923-2-162, 1103–07, 1109, 1114–15

Capital [*Kapital*] (1927–28)

Eisenstein conceived the project of adapting Karl Marx's *Capital: Critique of Political Economy* while working on the editing of his film *October*. In certain sequences of *October*, he discovered the possibility of enacting a cinematic language that could operate entirely free of any type of anecdotal reality, an intellectual cinema of concepts and theses, which led to the attempt with *Capital* to create a *kinotraktat*. Eisenstein's interest primarily lay not in the adaptation of the content of Marx's *Capital*, but in the adaptation of his method. The archive holdings consist of notes and diary entries in which the film's narrative reveals an intention to move according to the principle of the dialectic and to dally with the

associative technique of James Joyce, but ultimately lead viewers' minds along a path that would cause them to assimilate Marxian patterns of thought. Eisenstein developed the concept for several months before setting it aside to concentrate on projects that would further cinematic method to the point that the *Capital* concept would become practically achievable. Though the director maintained interest in producing *Capital* up until at least his departure for Europe and North America in 1929, he ceased to mention the possible endeavor afterward.

References: RGALI 1923-1-292–93, 1923-2-1104–8, 1916, 2256

MM Buys and Sells [*MM torguet*] (1928)

In 1928, while Eisenstein was engaged on several other film projects, he and his childhood friend, the actor Maxim Maximovich Shtraukh, began to develop an idea for an absurd Soviet comedy. The film, sometimes referred to in notes as *Khapman*, was to revolve around a character, first called Khap and later MM (after Shtraukh, who was to play him), an opportunistic entrepreneur devoted to assessing the weaknesses of socialist bureaucracy and benefiting from them. The project and its tone bear clear relation to other well-known comedies of the era of the New Economic Policy, including to Mayakovsky's *Bedbug*. The collaboration between Shtraukh and Eisenstein was close, to the point that it is not entirely clear whether Eisenstein or Shtraukh (who, in addition to acting, had worked as an assistant director for Eisenstein to this point) was to direct the film. After a few months of light development, the project was set aside in favor of other ones (*Glass House*, *Capital*, the completion of *The General Line*), but in 1932 it reemerged in a much different form as *MMM*.

References: RGALI 1923-1-350, 1923-2-163, 1106

The Road to Buenos Aires [*Put' v Buenos-Aires*] (1929)

According to several people who knew Eisenstein (Jay Leyda, Ivor Montagu, Mary Seton), one of the first possible projects to occur to the director during his stay in Europe was an adaptation of Albert Londres's work of investigative journalism on the white slavery trade, *Le chemin de Buenos-Aires*. Eisenstein's archives, however, contain no documents that bear any trace of such a project, and when Eisenstein mentions Londres's novel in his memoirs, he does not mention any attempt to

film it. According to Leyda, Eisenstein began writing a script together with Montagu and may have even proposed it to a French production company (Marie Seton surmises that this was *Le Societé Général du Film*). Montagu corroborates only the shared interest in such a project, but he does not mention any formal work on a screenplay. Most likely the project fell through when Eisenstein failed to agree with potential producers on issues of casting.

References: Leyda, *The Film Sense*, 222; Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 33; Seton, *Sergei Eisenstein, a Biography*, 136–37.

The Life of Émile Zola [*Zhizn' Emilia Zolia*] / *The Trial of Zola* [*Protsess Zolia*] (1930)

Upon his signing a contract with Paramount in 1930, Eisenstein received a list of possible literary materials for adaptation from producer Jesse Lasky, among which was a film on the Dreyfus affair. The play by Hans Rehfisch and Wilhelm Herzog, *Die Affäre Dreyfus*, which uses Zola's famous open letter "J'Accuse . . .!" as its dramatic foundation, was at the time running successfully in Berlin, and apparently Lasky felt this demonstrated the subject's viability with audiences. Although he left no archival trace of any work on the film, Eisenstein says in his memoirs that he was very excited by the prospect (he states in many places that Zola was his favorite novelist), and that he was completely decided on an orientation for the material: to make a searing epic against reactionary France that would mix character types from Zola's novels with the director's own impressions of the case and would highlight the underlying class struggle around the Dreyfus affair. An ironic coda (an elderly Dreyfus, far removed from the days of his famous trial, casting ill-considered judgment on a family cook who has been accused of stealing) was to end the film, and Eisenstein claims that his failure to ever shoot the coda was his only regret over not having made the film.

Reference: Eisenstein, *Memuary*, vol. 1, 178–80

Sutter's Gold (1930)

Sutter's Gold was the first full filmscript that Eisenstein submitted to Paramount, the Hollywood studio with which he had signed a contract in 1930. It was an adaptation of the 1925 French work, *L'Or* by Blaise Cendrars (whom Eisenstein had recently met in Paris). The novel (and

Eisenstein's screenplay adaptation of it) follows the famous nineteenth-century Swiss pioneer John Sutter on his journey from Europe to California and traces his rise and fall during the settling of the northern portions of the state and the subsequent California Gold Rush (1848–55). The project is not only notable as Eisenstein's first fully prepared screenplay to follow a traditional epic narrative and feature one central character, but it was also his first script composed with a full incorporation of an imagined audio soundtrack. Eisenstein and his collaborators did research at the historical sites related to Sutter and then produced the script in a flurry of inspiration in mid-1930. The screenplay was praised within the studio and outside it, but it was ultimately not accepted for production because of concerns over the size of the budget the script would require.

References: RGALI 1923-2-164–70; Eisenstein, [A.17]. MoMA Archives, New York

An American Tragedy (1930)

After the failure of *Sutter's Gold*, Eisenstein was given the assignment to adapt Theodore Dreiser's vast novel of ambition, temptation, and fate. In the process of adapting the novel, he found an opportunity to further develop his work with sound montage for the implementation of the cinematic device of interior monologue. A technique that he developed with reference to the literary monologues of James Joyce's *Ulysses*, interior monologue was employed to deepen the tragic quality of the film and to metaphorize the disjuncture between audio and video in the film's diegesis with the disjuncture between thought and action in the phenomenal world. Eisenstein structured the script around key dramatic moments featuring interior monologues (the main character Clyde's plans for murder, his enactment of the murder itself, his experience on death row, etc.), a conceit that allowed Eisenstein to sharpen the political orientation of the film and transpose Dreiser's sin-and-fate morality to an indictment of the socioeconomic system that produces heroes such as Clyde. Like its predecessor at Paramount, the script was outwardly praised but, because of concerns over its marketability, it was not accepted for production.

References: RGALI 1923-1-294–96; 1923-2-171–76; Eisenstein [A.18, C.8, D.1–3]. MoMA Archives, New York

Black Majesty [*Chernoe velichestvo*] (1930–31)

Based on Jon Vandercook's novel of the same name, *Black Majesty* was an idea for a film about the eighteenth-century Haitian revolution and Henri Christophe, one of the leaders of the revolution and eventually the self-proclaimed king of the new country. It was to be, like *Sutter's Gold* and *An American Tragedy*, a tragic story of greed—in this case, the tragedy of a leader's rebirth as a despot. The idea for the film was first conceived in Europe, further imagined in the United States (though he had no hope of attracting the interest of a Hollywood studio with the topic), developed in Mexico (where Eisenstein made many sketches of characters and scenes for the film), and then, briefly, back in the Soviet Union. Eisenstein wanted his new acquaintance, the African American actor Paul Robeson, to star in the film as Christophe. If any screenplay material was produced, it did not survive, though there are notes, drawings, and multiple autobiographical references to the project that testify to the project's importance to its creator.

References: RGALI 1923-1-340, 1923-2-177, 722–23

¡Que viva México! (1931)

Eisenstein spent several months in 1930 and 1931 in various parts of Mexico shooting footage for a planned film, financed by the American novelist and socialist Upton Sinclair. The film was envisioned with a six-part structure that would detail specifics of Mexican culture and history with no overarching narrative. Eisenstein imagined the film as a striped sarape (a multicolored, patterned blanket historically worn in Mexico), in which each section of the film was to be organized around a different folk song or melody, take place in a different region of the country, and feature a different ethnic subculture. A screenplay was fully written, and a vast amount of footage was shot (between thirty and fifty hours' worth), but before Eisenstein was able to finish shooting, financial and interpersonal misunderstandings arose between the American benefactor and Eisenstein. The director and his production crew of Grigori Alexandrov and Eduard Tisse was compelled to leave Mexico and return home quickly to the Soviet Union. Eisenstein left with the understanding that the footage would be sent to him in Moscow for editing, but it did not happen: the footage remained in the United States with Sinclair and was eventually split up and edited to produce short features and

informational films that had nothing to do with Eisenstein's original concept.

References: RGALI 1923-1-297–319, 323–39, 1065, 1086, 1434, 2896–97; 1923-2-40–62, 1641–45; 2020–21, 2143–53; 1923-3-73; Eisenstein, [A.16, B.13]. MoMA Archives, New York

MMM (1932–33)

MMM was Eisenstein's full-fledged attempt at Soviet comedy. The project picks up the pieces of 1928's *MM Buys and Sells* and reshuffles them definitively into a more formally experimental and politically daring comedy. The central character, Maxim Maximovich Maxim, is figured as a well-intentioned Soviet bureaucrat who, on a drunken night, accidentally calls on an entourage of figures from ancient Rus' to descend from the paintings in which they reside and run around contemporary Moscow. As Maxim tries to mitigate the damage that his medieval guests might cause in socialist Moscow, attempting to please both the Russia of the past and the new Soviet reality, he finds himself changing form, losing track of reality, and ultimately becoming a pawn in an elaborate game that the film itself plays with him. *MMM* contains a wealth of metacinematic devices that highlight—perhaps dangerously—the absurdity of a world in which the ultramodern coexists with the vestiges of the past. Over nine months, Eisenstein produced multiple treatments, several drafts of a screenplay, many drawings, and other preparatory materials, including casting and location notes as well as explanatory essays on the nature of film comedy. The film was approved by Soiuzkino for production, test shoots were held, crews were hired, and casting decisions were made. But despite the momentum built from all this work, the film was quickly and quietly set aside in 1933.

References: RGALI 1923-1-351–56; 1923-2-163, 178–90, 830, 1928

The Black Consul [*Chernyi konsul*] (1932–33)

After returning to the Soviet Union in 1932, Eisenstein renewed his enthusiasm for a project that would dramatize the eighteenth-century Haitian revolution. The new project was titled *The Black Consul*, and Eisenstein intended to have an entirely new approach to the subject matter with it, though he did plan to use some of the narrative and conceptual remains of the *Black Majesty* project (discussed above). The new film was approved for development by Soiuzkino in summer 1932

and its script was to be based on a novel currently being written by literary critic Anatolii Vinogradov. Eisenstein and Vinogradov agreed to collaborate on the screen adaptation of the novel's material, the tragic focus of which was the Haitian governor-general Toussaint Louverture, his rise to power, his military and political shrewdness, and ultimately his death at the hands of Bonapartist jailers. In an unexpected casting decision, Eisenstein hoped for Louverture to be played by the artistic director of the Moscow State Jewish Theater, Solomon Mikhoels and for Paul Robeson (who was to have played Henri Christophe in the plans for *Black Majesty*) to take on the part of Louverture's successor and the first emperor of Haiti, Jean-Jacques Dessalines. The film apparently spent months stuck in development gridlock and Eisenstein chose to move on and focus on other projects. In his mid-1930s lectures at VGIK, Eisenstein developed scene studies for his directing students that seemed to meld details from his two Haitian projects together.

References: RGALI 1923-1-357–58; 1923-2-722–23

Moscow [*Moskva*] (1933)

In 1933, immediately after setting aside the *MMM* project, Eisenstein responded to Soviet leadership's call for films that would celebrate the history of Moscow with an announcement that he was planning a vast historical epic about the nation's capital. Eisenstein's concept was to show Moscow through various historical epochs, including the birth of Muscovite royalty, the times of Ivan the Terrible and Peter the Great, the 1812 invasion by Napoleon, the 1905 and 1917 revolutions, the construction of the Moscow subway, and the bright future of the communist capital. The chronological immensity of the film was to have been mitigated by a pair of notable formally unifying cinema techniques. First, the same actors were to have been used to play different but similar characters in different historical epochs (one actor might play both ancestor and descendant), with the intention of creating the impression of continuity and cohesion between contrasting periods and social structures. Second, the film was meant to be organized, in Shakespearean style according to Eisenstein's interpretation, around the four elements: water, earth, fire, and air. Of these, fire was to have been most prominent, connecting the fires of Peter the Great's underground munitions forges with the 1812 fire of Moscow, on to the bonfires and burning barricades of the 1905 revolution, and synthesizing this with the metaphorical fire of Stalin's "flaming" oath to carry

further the charge of the recently deceased Lenin. Eisenstein produced hundreds of pages of notes and sketches for the imagined film but, despite calls for collaborators, no workable script was ever written for it.

References: RGALI 1923-1-359–61; 1923-2-191

Persia (Shahnameh/Ferdowsi) [*Fil'm o Persii—Shakh-name/Firdousi*] (1933)

In 1933, Eisenstein came across some plans for a film about Persia among the already existing properties available for production in the Mezhrabpromfilm film studio holdings and he immediately sought approval to make the film. It seems that, in his vision of Persia, the director had found an unexpected parallel to Mexico and an ideal place to transpose and update the concepts and techniques that he had discovered while working on his Mexican film. In correspondence with the Vostokkino film trust about his engagement on the film, Eisenstein lightly describes his plans and suggests that he wanted to adapt the tenth-century epic poem of Persian origins and history, *Shahnameh* (*The Book of Kings*), by the Persian poet Ferdowsi. Shumiatsky considered the production problematic and countermanded it. Although the archive contains correspondence between Eisenstein and the Central Committee and between Eisenstein and Vostokkino on plans to make the film, no written traces of actual creative development of the project survive. Some evidence, however, shows that the director's approach to the film's visual plane would have been influenced by his study of Persian miniature painting. It is also possible that, at this time, Eisenstein also entertained the thought of adapting Yuri Tynianov's novel about the death of Griboedov in Tehran, *The Death of the Vazir-Mukhtar*. Eventually Vostokkino decided to send a small crew of the documentary director Vladimir Erofeev and cameraperson and the Pudovkin-collaborator Anatoly Golovnya to film scenes, but nothing came of their endeavor either.

References: RGALI 1923-1-1517, 1574, 1576, 2565; 1923-2-613

La condition humaine [*Usloviia chelovecheskogo sushchestvovaniia*] (1934–35)

During the visit of French novelist André Malraux to Moscow in July 1934, Eisenstein agreed to a contract with the film studio Mezhrabpomfilm to act as an expert adviser for a film that would adapt Malraux's novel *La condition humaine* for the screen. Like the novel, the film was to

portray events surrounding the unsuccessful 1927 communist insurrection in Shanghai and the start of the Chinese Civil War. Eisenstein's involvement was, most likely, not to be as a director, but as a screenwriter, in support of the young director and Vsevolod Pudovkin protégé Albert Gendelshtein, and out of friendship with Malraux (whom Eisenstein had met several years earlier in Paris). Some sources also indicate that Isaac Babel was to have been involved in the development of the script. A short, typewritten screenplay is preserved in the archive, with Malraux listed as the sole author, from which it is impossible to tell how much personal authorship Eisenstein may have had in the work. The archive holds approximately twenty pages of Eisenstein's director's notes and sketches for scenes from the screenplay. There is no clear indication why the adaptation of Malraux's novel was never produced.

References: RGALI 1923-1-362-63; Bulgakowa, *Sergei Eisenstein: A Biography*, 163

Bezhin Meadow [*Bezhin Lug*] (1935–37)

Based on a script by Aleksandr Rzheshevsky, the original concept of *Bezhin Meadow* was to blend the Soviet true-hero tale of the young pioneer martyr Pavlik Morozov with the setting of Ivan Turgenev's 1851 short story "Bezhin Meadow," part of the collection *Notes of a Hunter*. Eisenstein reworked the Rzheshevsky script and began production in spring 1935 on a version of the film from which he had removed almost all the Turgenev elements, suffused it with Oedipal psychological drama, alienated it from its current political context, and projected the action into a somewhat mythological Soviet space. After viewing early footage during a pause in production in autumn 1935, Boris Shumiatsky halted production and demanded, because of the film's ideological failings, that the existing material (nearly two-thirds of a complete film) be rewritten and reshot. Isaac Babel was asked to help with the rewriting of the script and, after several months, Eisenstein and crew began shooting again. When the new footage was screened by the Central Committee of the KPSS, the production was permanently halted in March 1937. Both versions of the film were entirely lost or destroyed, with only still frames preserved from the editing process to give any sense of how the footage might have appeared. In the pamphlet "The Mistakes of *Bezhin Meadow*," Eisenstein was made to publicly admit his ideological impurities and pledge to rid himself of his anarchic individualism.

References: RGALI 1923-1-366–404, 1135, 1154, 1158, 1160, 1170–71, 1580, 2068, 2607, 2905; 1923-2-63–97, 866, 878, 893–95, 1779, 1896, 1928, 1931–36, 1975, 2032, 2171–74, 2236, 2256; Eisenstein, [B.1]. MoMA Archives, New York

We, the Russian People [*My, russkii narod*] (1937)

After the failure of his *Bezhin Meadow* project, and with a clear understanding of the precariousness of his political position, Eisenstein appealed for permission to begin planning a film about a comparatively safe topic—the founding of the Red Army in 1917–18. In this meeting of April 1937, Eisenstein asked to be allowed to collaborate with playwright Vsevolod Vishnevsky, whose screenplay *We, the Russian People*, based on Vishnevsky's novel of the same name, had been composed by its author specifically with Eisenstein in mind. In response, Shumiatsky suggested to Stalin and the rest of the Central Committee that Eisenstein be banned from all future work in cinema; the Central Committee, however, voted to have the state cinema leadership entrust Eisenstein with just such a safe topic to film and to have Eisenstein's work on future films far more closely supervised. Although this meant that Eisenstein could go on working, Vishnevsky's script was not, in the end, given to Eisenstein, but rather to Efim Dzigan, for whom the film also eventually fizzled, perhaps because of public critique of the script in the literary press. *We, the Russian People* was eventually shot and released by Mosfilm in 1965 with Vera Stroeva as director.

References: RGALI 1923-1-406, 1200; 1923-2-897, 1779, 1898

Spain [*Ispaniia*] (1937)

At the same time that he was developing the possibilities for filming *We, the Russian People* with Vsevolod Vishnevsky, Eisenstein began to discuss with the writer the possibility for a separate script and film about the contemporary. In correspondence with Vishnevsky written from the Kislovodsk sanatorium in which he was convalescing, Eisenstein imagined the film as the story of a young Moroccan soldier of the French Foreign Legion and his defection to the International Republican Brigade. Eisenstein's first impulses for casting the film followed the tendencies of several of his earlier unfinished films: Paul Robeson was envisioned as the soldier, Maxim Shtraukh was to have played a German fascist, Iudif' Glizer was to have played a Spanish revolutionary, and Pera Atasheva a

woman serving in the Foreign Legion. Though no practical plans for the film were ever made, Eisenstein nevertheless produced a rough sketch for a screenplay and a series of director's notes and drawings.

References: RGALI 1923-1-1470, 1711; 1923-2-194

Frunze/Perekop (1938–39)

In the aftermath of *Alexander Nevsky*'s great success, Eisenstein began considering materials for his next project. One of the most promising was a film about the military exploits of Red Army general Mikhail Frunze, who, as a Bolshevik political leader in the 1920s, had been a major supporter of Eisenstein's early film endeavors. Eisenstein had even become acquainted with Frunze before the latter's death in 1925. In summer 1938, Eisenstein was connected with the writer Alexander Fadeev (with whom he had previously worked) and his proposed coauthor Lev Nikulin, who planned to focus the script on Frunze's 1920 victory over White Army general Pyotr Wrangel at the Isthmus of Perekop in Crimea. The narrative features of this battle had long been an interest of Eisenstein and had been included or considered as episodes in his earlier plans for *Red Cavalry* and the second portion of *October* (discussed earlier). The writers produced a great deal of historical research that they shared with Eisenstein, and the director conducted correspondence with surviving participants in the battle. When Fadeev and Nikulin began submitting their script materials to Eisenstein, he was not particularly happy with what they had produced, and he engaged in significant revisions starting in November 1938. In the rewriting process, he produced many pages of director's notes and sketches, some of which date from as late as 1941. Apart from these sketches, all formal plans for the film seem to have come to a halt by summer of 1939, the reason for which remains unclear.

References: RGALI 1923-1-494–500, 1213, 1712, 2289, 2558; 1923-2-195–96, 908

Mademoiselle Fifi [*Doch' frantsii*] (1939)

In the middle of 1939, Eisenstein wrote a sixteen-page literary scenario based on the Guy de Maupassant short work "Mademoiselle Fifi," the story of a French Jewish prostitute's impulsive murder of a German officer in occupied Normandy during the Franco-Prussian war. The archive contains two versions of this script: one of sixteen pages

and another more developed version of forty-six pages. Eisenstein's work on adapting the material for the screen includes a good deal of invention and transposition, primarily through the addition of a more thoroughly revolutionary ending: in Maupassant's story the prostitute Rachel goes into hiding in the belltower of the occupied town church, where she regularly rings the bell as a symbol of victory over the Prussian army; in Eisenstein's script this symbol is literalized as Rachel mobilizes the local peasants to fight against the occupying soldiers. There is no evidence to clarify whether Eisenstein planned to direct a film from this script, whether he intended to give it to another director, or whether the writing of it was undertaken as an exercise.

References: RGALI 1923-1-1229; 1923-2-205

The Great Fergana Canal [*Bol'shoi Ferganskii kanal*] (1939)

The Great Fergana Canal was imagined as a triptych in which, like with the director's previous plans for *¡Que viva México!*, *MMM*, and *Moscow*, multiple periods of history were to be juxtaposed as a montage of eras. Here, the film was to depict three key axes of Uzbek history: the fourteenth-century domination of the Uzbek lands by Timur (Tamerlane), the destitution of prerevolutionary Uzbekistan by its Russian-backed feudal lords, and the contemporary collective struggle to build a canal in the arid Fergana valley. The conceptual-elemental spine of the film was the scarcity of water as a resource: sandstorms and water shortages under Timur's rule, the expropriation of poor Uzbeks' water by their feudal lords, and the triumph of contemporary engineering and labor as water accumulates and flows in the canal. And in contrast to the conceptual sarape that held together the disparate scenes of the Mexican film, the Uzbek film was to be held together by the presentation of narration by a single Uzbek epic singer who would sometimes function as a commentator and sometimes as a participant in the drama. In May 1939, Pyotr Pavlenko (his collaborator on the *Alexander Nevsky* script) had approached Eisenstein with the idea to travel to Uzbekistan and film the Fergana canal as it was being built (a process that took only just over one month). Eisenstein and a small crew (including Pavlenko and Eduard Tisse) spent significant portions of summer 1939 in and around Uzbekistan's Fergana Valley, where they indeed made documentary footage of the massive new waterway and its accompanying hydroelectric plants under construction. Multiple drafts of a screenplay were produced, and Eisenstein composed director's scripts and numerous

sketches for shots and sets while also gathering a great deal of research on Uzbek material and visual culture. Eisenstein asked Sergei Prokofiev to agree to compose the score for the film. Though the plans that Eisenstein's group submitted were initially approved, disagreement arose between the director and the film administration over the historical angle of the film, and their wish for the Timur section of the film to be removed. Eisenstein refused to cut this material and left the project.

References: RGALI 1923-1-501–25, 1225, 2640, 2908; 1923-2-197–204, 919, 1902, 1940, 2185, 2259–60; 1923-3-4

The Love of a Poet [*Liubov' poeta*] / Pushkin (1940–41)

Toward the end of the late 1930s, Eisenstein had developed a great interest in the nineteenth-century Russian poet Alexander Pushkin and the relationship of his work to cinema and began to plan a book on the topic. In early 1940, perhaps related to this theoretical work on Pushkin, Eisenstein conceived of a biographical film of the poet's life and quickly wrote a short outline for a screenplay. Throughout the year, Eisenstein researched material with which he could embellish the planned film, which—pursuant to his experiments developing his previous color film concepts *Giordano Bruno*, *Lawrence*, and *Plague*—he had chosen to film in color. This formal decision caused an unmistakable wellspring of ideas for the director, and he translated them into written and graphic sketches for the film's scenes, as well as theoretical writing on color film. Perhaps at the suggestion of fellow filmmaker Esfir Shub, Eisenstein adapted ideas from Yuri Tynianov's recent works on Pushkin, in which the poet was revealed to have suppressed an abiding and secret love for Ekaterina Karamzin, the wife of the much older writer Nikolai Karamzin. The director also imbued the script with a notable autobiographical parable: the conflict between artist and dictator, as played out in physical and psychological struggles between Pushkin and Tsar Nikolai I (including an extended scene of debauched intrigue in the tsar's chambers). In late 1941, after having been evacuated to Kazakhstan during the war, Eisenstein wrote a more comprehensive libretto for the film that focused more specifically on the color treatment of the film, and he continued to make occasional director's notes related to the project throughout the duration of the war. The state of color film technology seems to have been a deterring factor for the project, as was Tynianov's death at the end of 1943.

References: RGALI 1923-2-207–11, 9706; Eisenstein, [D.4]. MoMA Archives, New York; Bulgakowa, *Sergei Eisenstein: A Biography*, 208

Prestige of the Empire [*Prestizh impirii*] (1940)

In May 1940, while searching for new ideas, Eisenstein became acquainted with the writer and Soviet trial investigator Lev Sheinin. Sheinin and Eisenstein would discuss multiple projects, including the possibility for a film about T. E. Lawrence (discussed later), but it was Sheinin's recently completed play, *Prestige of the Empire*, that attracted Eisenstein's attention most. The play dramatized the notorious 1913 trial of Menahem Mendel Beilis in Kiev, in which Beilis, a Russian Jew, was accused of ritually killing a Christian boy, and the subsequent trial drew the attention of the entire Russian empire and much of the world. Eisenstein was fascinated by the project of adapting the play to the screen and saw in it the opportunity to return to some of the material that had interested him in his earlier project *The Life of Émile Zola*. By late May, Eisenstein had begun writing the screenplay for the film, though it remained unfinished. The themes of Russian nationalism and racism and of Jewish persecution would have been apparent in the script, but Eisenstein did not see *Prestige of the Empire* as a "Jewish film," but, because of its positive ending (Beilis is ultimately acquitted), he rather considered it to be ultimately about the internationalism of "the great Russian people." Nevertheless, a script that featured state-sponsored pogroms and heavy treatment of Russia's former antisemitic policies—not to mention a focus on an unjust trial that revealed both the political calculations of anxious authorities and the persecution of citizens by government prosecutors—could not possibly have been met with enthusiastic approval by the Soviet film administration, given the political situation of the country in 1940. Eisenstein and Sheinin appealed to the Central Committee for permission to make the film but, in a personal conversation with Zhdanov, that permission was denied.

References: RGALI 1923-1-527–29; 1923-2-1162–63

Giordano Bruno [*Dzhordano Bruno*] / *Lawrence* [*Lourens*] / *Plague* [*Chuma*] (1940)

In early and mid-1940, having been strongly encouraged by the Soviet film administration to develop some film projects that would make

use of new color film technologies, Eisenstein landed on three different ideas, all of which he briefly developed and set aside.

Giordano Bruno was to have been a Renaissance-era film about the sixteenth-century philosopher and cosmologist, a heretic who was burned at the stake by the Catholic Inquisition. The film's color angle was to have featured colorful costumes, interiors lit by the warm glow of fires, immolation pyres, and other medieval color-tone possibilities.

The film known as *Lawrence* was envisioned as a biography of the British archaeologist and army officer and his involvement in the Arab Revolt and other military action in the Middle East. Eisenstein saw Lawrence as a Dostoevskian nihilist, and his blue eyes, green banner, and green turban provided the primary color inspiration for the imagined film. Lev Sheinin was expected to be the scriptwriter for the film.

The film known as *Plague* was a project suggested by Soviet cinema administrators and one that Eisenstein entertained extremely briefly: an examination of the black death and its growth. The director suggests that the administrative enthusiasm over the proposal had to do with the potential for colorful costumes; his ironic response was to figure the black death literally and have blackness slowly absorb all the film's color. Eisenstein submitted a proposal the same year to make a scientific film about the struggle against plague.

All three of these projects were taken up and abandoned quickly, all with some indication that Eisenstein felt color film technology was not ready to support the ideas he had developed.

References: RGALI 1923-1-526; Eisenstein, *Memuary*, vol. 2, 200–202

Moscow 800 [*Moskva 800*] (1946)

In 1946, in preparation for the eight-hundredth anniversary of Moscow, which was to be celebrated the following year, Eisenstein brought together two threads that had remained in his store of unfinished projects: the possibility of making a film about the Soviet capital city, and the possibility of using color film technology as part of his ever-expanding method of film technique. Under the title *Moscow 800*, the director developed a supremely mutable and elemental plan for a color film based on a seven-stage visual progression of various manifestations of Moscow (iconographic, wood, white stone, printed textile, cast iron, steel, rainbow). In all this, Moscow is figured as the savior of Europe, the three-time buffer from the Tatars, from Napoleon, and from the Nazis. In the archive, multiple versions of the director's plans for the structure of the

film and of a document that he titled "The Color Pedigree of *Moscow 800*" survive. The project never moved beyond such early plans.

Reference: RGALI 1923-2-215–16

Ivan the Terrible III [*Ivan groznyi, tret'ia seriia*] (1946)

The final installment of Eisenstein's three-part film treatment of the foundational figure of the Russian Empire. This portion, titled "Ivan's Struggles," was to have covered the conflict between Kurbsky and Ivan, the destruction of Novgorod and, inaccurately, Ivan's victory in the battle for the Baltic. The final shot was to have been an apotheosis of the tsar standing in solitude on the edge of the dark sea. Eisenstein wrote the scenario, made numerous sketches, and even shot a few scattered scenes. Because of the nature of the work on the trilogy, much that had been generated for the previous two installments might also be seen as the genetic material of the third part. Notably, however, the progression of Ivan's age and physical contortion in the third section generated a great deal of makeup tests. The work on this third episode of the film was halted by Stalin's banning of the second episode, whereupon all shot footage was destroyed. Eisenstein abandoned the film, along with most other production pursuits, after the severe heart attack he experienced in 1946.

References: RGALI 1923-2-130, 132; Leyda and Voynow, *Eisenstein at Work*, 135–45

Minor Unrealized Works

In composing this appendix, I have relied primarily on my own archival investigations, but I have also benefited from the original research published in Bulgakowa, *Sergei Eisenstein: A Biography*; Kleiman, *Neoshchustvlennye zamysli Eizenshteina*; Leyda, *Kino*; Leyda and Voynow, *At Work with Eisenstein*; and Seton, *Sergei Eisenstein, a Biography*.

These less developed ideas for films, fleeting ideas, mostly proposals from outside sources, seem to be suited for categorization under the heading of what Eisenstein refers to as "a series of brilliant meteors of realizable and unrealizable 'proposals,' of which there have been not a few."[1]

- Advertising film for Nestlé's condensed milk (1929)
- Film for the one-hundredth anniversary of Belgian independence (1929)

- Film in memory of Simón Bolívar, to be shot in Venezuela (1929)
- Film about the positive influence of Britain in its colonies (1929)
- An adaptation of Vicki Baum's novel *Grand Hotel* (1930)
- An adaptation of H. G. Wells's novel *The War of the Worlds* (1930)
- An adaptation of Maurice Rostand's play *L'homme que j'ai tué* (1930)
- An adaptation of Miguel de Cervantes's novel *Don Quixote*, starring Feodor Chaliapin (1930)
- The sufferings of Jesuit missionaries in North America at the hands of the natives (1930)
- An adaptation of Lion Feuchtwanger's novel *Jud süß* (1930)
- An adaptation of Erich Maria Remarque's novel *The Road Back* (1930)
- An adaptation of George Bernard Shaw's play *Arms and the Man* (1930)
- A film about Al Capone (1930)
- An adaptation of Anatole France's novel *The Revolt of the Angels* (1930)
- An adaptation of Rudyard Kipling's novel *Kim*, to be shot in India (1931)
- A history of the state of Texas (1931)
- *The Five-Year Plan* (1931–32)
- A film about railroad transport (1936)
- *Gold*, from a screenplay by Vadim Distler (1937)
- *The Lay of Igor's Campaign* (1937)
- *The Moor of Peter the Great* (1937)
- *Minin and Pozharsky* (1937)
- *The Brothers Karamazov* (1943)
- Film about war (1944)
- *The World Inside Out* (1945)

Notes

Introduction: Dangling over the Abyss

1. Eizenshtein, *Metod*, vol. 1, 332–33.

2. The announcement, along with a brief comment on Eisenstein's talk, is recorded in *Kino*, 10 February 1935, 4.

3. Eizenshtein, *Metod*, vol. 1, 333. In his commentary on this passage of *Method* (484), Naum Kleiman highlights the widespread cinematic superstition against the premature announcement of a film's title and the practice of intentionally applying a working title to the film (*Metod*, vol. 1, 484).

4. Eizenshtein, *Metod*, vol. 1, 332.

5. See the front pages of *Pravda* and *Izvestiia* as well as industry papers such as *Kino* from 11 January 1935, all of which carry Stalin's greeting to the Soviet film industry.

6. *Za bol'shoe kinoiskusstvo*, 109. This volume contains transcriptions of all speeches from the conference in question and demonstrates that although Eisenstein also had his defenders during the conference's main section (scholar Nikolai Lebedev and director Lev Kuleshov were outspoken in their support), criticism of the director was a persistent theme of the gathering. On the conference's fourth day, 11 January, Eisenstein's position seemed to have been made official when state awards were given out to the luminaries of Soviet cinema, with several of Eisenstein's critics receiving the Order of Lenin and the director himself only accorded a relatively minor salutary decoration.

7. *Za bol'shoe kinoiskusstvo*, 100.

8. *Za bol'shoe kinoiskusstvo*, 56.

9. *Za bol'shoe kinoiskusstvo*, 72–73.

10. The All-Union Conference was held just one month after the murder of Sergei Kirov and in the early wake of Stalin's subsequent reprisals—generally considered the beginning of the Great Purge.

11. *Za bol'shoe kinoiskusstvo*, 112–13.

12. *Za bol'shoe kinoiskusstvo*, 163. A slightly amended version of these two speeches may be found in Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 2, 93–130 (p. 128 quoted here).

13. *Za bol'shoe kinoiskusstvo*, 164.

14. *Za bol'shoe kinoiskusstvo*, 29.

15. Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 5, 80–81.

16. The American film historian Jay Leyda, a former student of Eisenstein at VGIK, makes an early argument for the director's multivalent vitality in his introduction to the 1942 collection of Eisenstein's essays, *The Film Sense*: "Eisenstein's contribution to the film medium is a double one—as film-maker

and film-teacher" and notes that English speakers until then had had "only scattered opportunities to appreciate his contribution in the field of theory" (Jay Leyda, Translator's note, in Eisenstein, *The Film Sense*, ix). The upsurge of Western interest in Eisenstein as a theoretician during the 1960s and 1970s is typified by Annette Michelson's characterization of Eisenstein, along with Stan Brakhage, as "artists who invent strategies, vocabularies, syntactical and grammatical forms for film" and who "share a common function, through a conjunction of *praxis* and *theoria*, to define those possibilities and to determine the arenas of discourse and of action" (Michelson, "Camera Lucida Camera Obscura," 30–31).

17. Natalie Ryabchikova quips in a 2017 issue of *Critical Quarterly* that "for better or worse, Sergei Eisenstein has finally been turning into a 'research industry'" (Ryabchikova, "Eisenstein as Modernist," 4).

18. See Belodubrovskaya's *Not According to Plan* for a wealth of evidence that demonstrates just how common incompletion—in its many forms—was in the Soviet film industry.

19. Eizenshtein, "K predisloviu," 6.

20. Kleiman, "Neosushchestvlennye zamysli Eizenshteina," 9. See also, for example, Tsivian, "Eisenstein and Russian Symbolist Culture."

21. Tsivian, *Ivan the Terrible*, 7. See also Neuberger, *Ivan the Terrible* and *This Thing of Darkness*.

22. Michelson, "Reading Eisenstein Reading *Ulysses*," 64.

23. For example, "S. M. Eizenshtein. Iz neosushchestvlennykh zamyslov ['Kapital']," 56–67; "*MMM*," in *Iz istorii kino*, 98–152; and "'Stekliannyi dom' S. M. Eizenshteina," 94–113.

24. That is, the appearance, in 1975, of a German translation of the *Capital* material by Hans Joachim Schlegel, included in Eisenstein, *Schriften*, vol. 3; the 1976 English translation of the same by Leyda, Sliwowski, and Michelson in *October* 2 (Summer 1976): 3–26; and the 1980 French translation by Barthélemy Amengual in *¡Que Viva Eisenstein!*, 585–606.

25. Michelson, "Reading Eisenstein Reading *Capital*," parts 1 and 2; Iampolskii, "'Mifologiia' stekla v novoevropeiskoi kul'ture"; Clark, "Eisenstein's Two Projects"; and Tyerman, *Internationalist Aesthetics*, 157–68.

26. Salazkina, *In Excess*; Vogman, *Dance of Values*.

27. Shklovsky, *Eizenshtein*, 206.

28. Eizenshtein, *Metod*, vol. 1, 317.

29. Widdis, "Socialist Senses," 590.

30. Taylor, *The Politics of the Soviet Cinema*, x.

1. Toward an Imaginary Cinema

1. Eizenshtein, *Metod*, vol. 1, 359.

2. Eizenshtein, *Metod*, vol. 1, 355.

3. See Pliny, *Natural History*, vol. 9, 367. I come to Pliny via a quotation in the catalog *Unfinished: Thoughts Left Visible*, published in conjunction with the exhibition (Met Breuer, March–September 2016) of the same name. Pliny's consideration of the unfinished appears more than once in the very useful

collection of essays devoted to unfinished works that are included in the catalog. Both exhibition and catalog are an instance of how a Plinian view of the unfinished pervades even contemporary thinking on the subject: not only does it inform the premise of some of the catalog's essays, but the curators also deploy it in the very title (in a somewhat reordered form) of the exhibition itself.

4. Pliny, *Natural History*, vol. 9, 367.

5. Vasari, *Lives of the Artists*, 287. For Varchi, see Bambach, "Leonardo, Michelangelo, and Notions of the Unfinished in Art," 33. A popular, twenty-first-century perspective on the problem of the unfinished in Renaissance painting can be had in Naomi Grant's review of Piero della Francesca's restored *Nativity* in "At the National Gallery."

6. Beardsley, "On the Creation of Art." In this passage, Beardsley paraphrases and quotes from Thomas's *Creativity in the Arts*.

7. Beardsley, "On the Creation of Art," 299.

8. My translation. A quotation that has been heavily recycled and paraphrased. For the original, see Valéry's essay on his poem "Le cimetière marin" in the March 1933 edition of *Nouvelle revue française*.

9. For an instance of Auden's paraphrase (with attribution to Valéry), see W. H. Auden, Foreword to *Collected Shorter Poems*, 16; for Cocteau, see Gore Vidal's meditation on Henry James and the mature artist's tendency to revise early work in "Speaking of Books"; for Lucas (and his attribution of the quotation to "a famous filmmaker," see Ivry, "Star Light, Star Bright." See also "A Work of Art Is Never Finished," *Quote Investigator*, quoteinvestigator.com/2019/03/01/abandon/.

10. Livingston, *Art and Intention*, 31–49.

11. Coleridge, *Poetical Works*, vol. 1, 296.

12. Coleridge, *Poetical Works*, vol. 1, 296. These lines are an insertion into the preface from Coleridge's own 1804 poem, "The Picture, or the Lover's Resolution" (Coleridge, *Poetical Works*, vol. 1, 372). *Kubla Khan* itself consists of fifty-four finished lines presented as the only remnant of the fleeting "two to three hundred" that the dreaming author had glimpsed.

13. Baudelaire, *Mirror of Art*, 29. Baudelaire's statement (on works by Jean-Baptiste-Camille Corot) hinges on the French terminology he employs for the finished (*fini*)—and its proximity to the infinite (*infini*)—in opposition to the completed (*fait*).

14. Gogol, "Portrait," 340–92.

15. Zola, *Masterpiece*, 351. Eisenstein discusses *The Masterpiece* and other Zola works in *Neravnodushnaia priroda*, vol. 2, 82–83. He was also fascinated by the unfinished in another of his beloved French novelists—Honoré de Balzac—such as Balzac's early unfinished *Coqsigrue* and the literary biographer René Benjamin's description of its incompletion as caused by "joyous illusions" and ideas that were "brief, but always brilliant" (RGALI 1923-2-1109, 159). See also Benjamin, *Balzac*, 28–29, and his short work *The Unknown Masterpiece*, a story that also explores themes of completion, its near unattainability, the arbitrariness of its definition, and its metaphorical resemblance to death.

16. Or, as Sarah Keller writes, "collaborative by its nature, replete with missing and destroyed components of its history, built in all but the most

exceptional cases out of fragments pieced together to give the impression of a whole, incompletion underscores cinema at every level" (Keller, *Maya Deren*, 17).

17. Arnheim, "The Complete Film," 158.

18. Though the problem of realism and the drive toward mimesis is central to much of Bazin's writing, it is given particular attention in "Myth of Total Cinema." I am grateful to Karla Oeler for leading me to this connection.

19. Bresson, *Notes on the Cinematographer*, 107.

20. Remes, *Absence in Cinema*, 3. We may draw a correlation to a similar phenomenon in literature with textual references to nonexistent works: Ozick, "Library of Nonexistent Classics."

21. Quoted in Bayer, "Renaissance Views of the Unfinished," 29.

22. Deleuze, *Cinema 2*, 77. The Deleuze-Fellini formulation may easily be seen as the materialist development of the Valéry quotation on completeness and its verbal descendants. A similar focus on the industrial determination of cinema can also be seen in a second, slightly unsettling rendition of the maxim by George Lucas, quoted by Livingston, that "a film is finished only when the director is gone" (Livingston, *Art and Intention*, 57).

23. See Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 98.

24. Cinema's own fascination with its penchant for the unfinished can be observed in two particularly self-conscious phenomena: narrative films whose plots present imagined films and filmmakers that are endangered by incompletion (for example, *Sullivan's Travels* [1941], *Le mépris* [1963], *Adaptation* [2002]), and documentary films whose structure is determined by their treatment of actual unrealized film projects (as with *Notes toward an African Orestes* [1970] or *Lost in La Mancha* [2002]).

25. For some, however, the advent of artificial intelligence systems has begun to satisfy the urge to "view" the unrealized film. See Pavich's essay on an AI-generated version of *Tron* as if directed by Alejandro Jodorowsky in Pavich, "This Film Does Not Exist," SR12.

26. Keller, *Maya Deren*, 10, 2. Thomas Beard suggests that "considered collectively . . . perhaps [unfinished films] constitute a secret canon made up of the rawest and, in turn, most revealing sides of an artist's practice." On this point, see Beard's short essay "Scene Missing," 202.

27. Quoted in Miller, "Finish/Finished,"132.

28. A surprisingly exact literary manifestation of this type of filmmaker exists in Gerald Murnane's 1982 novel *The Plains*, which centers on a filmmaker narrator who spends years in remotest Australia attempting to make a film about the land and its inhabitants. As Andrew Zawacki says in his 2002 foreword to the Western Michigan University edition of the novel, the filmmaker "spends years preparing to write a treatment that never materializes. He devises a 'Master Key to Catalogue of Background Notes and Inspirational Material,' complete with an extensive series of labeled folders and meticulous memos, but he never arrives at anything remotely resembling an actual film." In this case, the intrigue brews from the infinite deferral of the film's possibility.

29. On this point, see Baer, Hennefeld, Norak, and Iverson, eds., *Unwatchable*. Apart from the multifarious theoretical exploration of cinema that

actively avoids its own viewing, the Baer and others volume includes an essay of particular relevance to this topic written by Rongen-Kaynakçi on F. Goodwin's 1921 film *Blood Money* and the implications of preserving the incomplete film archivally.

30. Salazkina, *In Excess*. For Rosenbaum, see his "When Will—and How Can—We Finish Orson Welles's *Don Quixote*?" For Keller, see her *Maya Deren*. The value of Keller's work in proposing new ways of approaching the unfinished film should not be understated; moreover, her analysis of Deren uncovers many useful paradigmatic connections between Deren and Eisenstein, not only in working method and theoretical tendency but also in the productivity of their unfinished works. This deep comparison between Deren and Eisenstein owes its genesis to an original correlation between the two filmmakers performed by Michelson in her 1980 article "On Reading Deren's Notebooks."

31. Richard Rorty, and after him Jonathan Crary, have both proposed observational models for the mind, based on the "empty, dark" projection space of the camera obscura (Rorty, *Philosophy and the Mirror of Nature*, 45; Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, 43. See also Iampolski, "Logic of an Illusion," 35.

32. Quoted in Keller, *Maya Deren*, 17.

33. RGALI 1923-2-1104, 46. Of course, Eisenstein's inclusion of *The General Line* in the list of odd and completed works is premature. When this note was written in 1927, *The General Line* had not actually been completed and would not be until early 1929, when it would be retitled as *The Old and the New*.

34. A brief summary of the odd (realized projects) follows: *The Mexican* was staged in the Second Central Studio of the Proletkult, though Valentin Smyshlaev was credited as director and Eisenstein credited as designer of sets and costumes. But it is clear from this note and other sources that Eisenstein considered himself the true author of the play (Iurenev, *Sergei Eizenshtein*, vol. 1, 44–45). Eisenstein staged *Wiseman*, coadapted with Sergei Tretiakov from Alexander Ostrovsky's *Enough Stupidity in Every Wise Man*, in the First Workers' Theatre in April 1923. Tretiakov's original play, *Are You Listening, Moscow?*, premiered at the Operetta Theatre on Bolshaia Dmitrovka in November 1923. *Gasmasks*, a second original work by Tretiakov, was staged in the workspace of a Moscow gas factory in February 1924. Eisenstein's first feature film, *Strike*, was given its initial public showing in March 1925, and *Battleship Potemkin* premiered at the Goskino Theatre in January 1926. And a summary of the (even unrealized) works follows here: In the summer of 1921, after his successful conception for *The Mexican*, Eisenstein was invited to stage Leonid Andreev's play *King Hunger* in the Central Proletkult Theatre for Valentin Tikhonovich, but the project ran into ideological trouble and was abandoned after two months of preparation. A collaboration with Proletkult playwright Valerian Pletnev, *Garland's Inheritance*, was conceived in 1923 but never staged. Eisenstein again partnered with Pletnev on a second ill-fated collaboration of 1923, a three-act detective drama called *Patatras* that was never staged. Very little information survives on Eisenstein's intention to direct a play about Yakov Triapitsyn, the infamous Red Army commander responsible for the 1920 Nikolayevsk massacre. Between December 1924 and summer 1925, together with Grigorii Alexandrov, Eisenstein developed plans for a film about the Civil War that would

be a partial adaptation of Isaac Babel's *Red Cavalry* stories, but the project was set aside in favor of making *Battleship Potemkin*. In 1926, Eisenstein explored the possibility of a three-part film series with the working title *Dzhungo* that would address China's revolutionary movement, and which was to be written by Sergei Tretiakov.

35. RGALI 1923-2-1104, 47.

36. RGALI 1923-2-1108, 152. "Khap" should be understood here as one of the working titles for a comedy Eisenstein had begun developing at that time with his friend and collaborator Maksim Shtraukh, most often referred to as *MM torguet* (*MM Buys and Sells*), which would later partially inform the 1932–33 project *MMM*.

37. The impulse to shoot *Glass House* in America was inherent in the project's design, from its genesis (see chapter 2).

38. Eizenshtein, *Metod*, vol. 2, 151. See also Granet, *La pensée chinoise*, 279–81.

39. Eizenshtein, *Metod*, vol. 2, 151.

40. Eizenshtein, "K predisloviu," 4–8.

41. "Ich möchte eine Tragödie in Gedanken schreiben können. Es würde ein Meisterwerk werden!" (Eizenshtein, "K predisloviu," 5). See also Grillparzer's *Tagebuch* for April 1809 in Franz Grillparzer, *Franz Grillparzer*, 45.

42. Eizenshtein, "K predisloviu," 5.

43. Borges, *Collected Fictions*, 157–62.

44. Eizenshtein, "K predisloviu," 6–7.

45. Eizenshtein, "K predisloviu," 7.

46. Eizenshtein, "K predisloviu," 7.

47. Eizenshtein, "K predisloviu," 5–6. The depth and fatefulness of Eisenstein's interest and identification with Leonardo da Vinci can be sensed not just from the multiple analyses the director makes throughout his later writings of da Vinci's works (of *The Last Supper* and *The Virgin and Child with St. Anne*, for example); he also refers to the period just before he began his activities in theater, saying that da Vinci was "the ruler of [his] thoughts at that time" and that he "read through absolutely everything that related to [him]" (*Metod*, vol. 1, 393).

48. Eizenshtein, "K predisloviu," 6. Later, in *Metod*, Eisenstein would develop the metaphor from conception through to childbirth and motherhood, writing of the permanent incompleteness of his *¡Que viva México!* as "death—the death of my own child, in whom had been placed so much love, labor, and inspiration"; in contrast, he finds himself "cold and unfeeling" toward his completed "screen children," claiming to relate to them as does "a cuckoo, depositing her eggs in the nests of strangers." He attributes this lack of maternal feeling to the trauma experienced with the Mexican film (Eizenshtein, *Metod*, vol. 1, 249, 339).

49. Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 5, 80–81.

50. Eizenshtein, *Metod*, vol. 1, 336.

51. Eizenshtein, *Metod*, vol. 1, 337.

52. Eizenshtein, *Metod*, vol. 1, 337–38.

53. Eizenshtein, *Memuary*, vol. 2, 45–47.

54. Eizenshtein, *IP,* vol. 1, 196–97.

55. Michel Foucault, *Essential Works*, vol. 1, 272.

56. Vogman, *Dance of Values*, 82. Foucault's interest in these techniques of personal writing seems particularly oriented toward their traversing of time—fixing the past in a notation toward which the present may always look back (Foucault, *Essential Works*, vol. 1, 212).

57. RGALI 1923-2-796, 8–9. Published in Sergei Eizenshtein, *Montazh*, edited by Naum Kleiman (Moscow: Muzei kino, 2004), 75. Oksana Bulgakowa has demonstrated how central this passage from Eisenstein's notes was to the development of his overall "method" (Bulgakowa, *Sergej Eisenstein: Drei Utopien*, and Bulgakowa, "Teoriia kak utopicheskii Proekt.")

58. The Soviet film industry's practices in the development and use of script materials was complex and changed significantly over the 1920s and 1930s. For a concise overview of the Soviet filmscript, with emphasis on the ways in which it sought to employ modes of the "literary," see Belodubrovskaya, "The Literary Scenario."

59. I have slightly modified the translation found in Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 134. (See Eisenstein, *IP*, vol. 2, 297.)

60. Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 134–35.

61. This film-imagining process is resonant with the phenomenological model of the reading process (with its "'picturing' that is done by our imagination") proposed by Iser (*The Implied Reader*, 283–85).

62. Bresson, *Notes on the Cinematographer*, 23.

63. Pasolini, "Screenplay as a Structure," 53, 59. Pasolini's formulation of the screenplay as an autonomous structure also allows us to consider the phenomenon of unproduced scripts that have taken on a kind of cult value (examples might include Lem Dobbs's *Edward Ford* or Antonin Artaud's or Vladimir Mayakovsky's conceptual script experiments), as well as what have been called "closet screenplays" (scripts whose status as written and unfilmed cinema is accentuated because of either the persistence of their literariness or an intentionally unfilmable quality).

64. See, for example, the description of his fellow film director Grigorii Roshal': "He was endlessly drawing, he drew at every free moment, and even when he was busy: at meetings, while listening to lectures, and even when he was delivering his own lectures to students" (Roshal', "Cherez vsiu zhizn'," 182).

65. Eizenshtein, "O risunkakh."

66. Attributed to Eisenstein by R. Iurenev in *Notes of a Film Director*, 211.

67. Michelson, "A World Embodied in the Dancing Line," 15.

68. Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 1, 198.

69. Kleiman, *Eizenshtein na bumage*, 24.

70. Linda Nochlin, "Courbet's Real Allegory," 116.

71. Platonov, "Among Animals and Plants," 169.

Part I. Ideal/Material

1. As examples, Zoe Beloff and Iñigo Manglano-Ovalle are two contemporary artists whose work explicitly engages Eisenstein's *Glass House*. See Beloff's identically titled 2015 short film *Glass House* and its related exhibition

(with catalog), *A World Redrawn*, and Manglano-Ovalle's 2009 installation *Gravity Is a Force to Be Reckoned With* (North Adams, MA: Massachusetts Museum of Contemporary Art).

2. Bataille, "*Les écarts de la nature*," 82; Debord, "The Practice of Theory: Cinema and Revolution," 188; Kluge, *Nachrichten aus der ideologische Antike* (and see Kluge's extensive peripheral print materials).

3. The premiere was scheduled for March 1926 but was postponed to address the requirements of German censorship. The eventual premiere took place on 29 April, after he had returned to Russia.

4. RGALI, 1923-2-1103, 13 (b). Some have construed that the Hotel Hessler was itself a multilevel glass structure and thus among the initial building models (see Chadaga, *Optical Play*, 155, or Bergan, *Sergei Eisenstein*, 122). This is not the case: photographs show that Hotel Hessler, on Berlin's Kantstraße, was a nineteenth-century stone-and-plaster construction in a neoclassical style and would not have inspired the director's glass imaginings. Like most of Kantstraße, Hotel Hessler was razed at the end of World War II (Bloor, *Enigma*, 480).

5. Emblematic of this tendency, even the variations in orthography for the film's title turn away from Russia: sometimes Eisenstein uses the German *Glashaus*, quite often the English *Glass House*, and even occasionally a combination of the two, such as *Glashouse*. The director employs what would have been the film's Russian title, *Stekliannyi dom*, only on rare occasions.

6. RGALI 1923-2-1104, 24.

7. RGALI 1923-2-1105, 2–3. The impossibility of Marx ever intending *Capital* to be read as a film scenario emphasizes the polemic of Eisenstein's playful misnomer: the conceptual limits of the film scenario must be expanded to include political-economic treatises such as those written by Marx.

8. These pages are labeled in Cyrillic script "St D." (for *Stekliannyi dom*), one of the exceptional instances in which the project is referred to by the Russian title (RGALI 1923-2-1916, 10–12).

9. This is one conclusion Eisenstein comes to in his essay "Our *October*" (*SW* 1, 101–6).

10. These qualities of *The General Line* can be seen, respectively, as the fulfillment of what Eisenstein discusses in his 1926 essay "Five Eras" (Eizenshtein, "Piat' epokh") and as the basis for his 1929 essay "The Fourth Dimension in Cinema" (Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 181–86).

11. "Our *October*," in *SW*, vol. 1, 104.

12. RGALI 1923-2-1107, 15.

13. RGALI, 1923-2-1105, 16–17; Eizenshtein, "Iz neosushchestvlennykh zamyslov," 57.

14. RGALI, 1923-2-1105, 17; Eizenshtein, "Iz neosushchestvlennykh zamyslov," 58.

15. RGALI, 1923-2-1107, 148.

16. Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 59–60.

17. Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 61. See Koltsov, "'Stachka.'" *Pravda*, 14 March 1925.

18. Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 59.

19. A criticism of Dziga Vertov constitutes the second half of Eisenstein's article. The thrust of his criticism is that Vertov fetishizes the objectivity of both the human and the mechanical eye—and thereby denies the materialist essence of art, its "utilitarian application" (Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 62).

20. Eizenshtein, *Montazh*, 443 (Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 39.)

21. Eisenstein's pursuit of this new and tendentious method was developed just as Soviet Russia was passing through its "great break" and turning violently toward forced collectivization and industrialization, a complex sociopolitical recalibration in which the question of proper ideology was not a fixed one. The destabilizing developments, with their implications for the arts (away from formal experimentation toward a new and pragmatic aesthetic clarity), mark both *Capital* and *Glass House* as somehow conceptually tardy—a proclivity Eisenstein's more orthodox critics would seize on throughout the late 1920s and early 1930s.

22. RGALI 1923-2-1104, 103.

23. Michelson, "Reading Eisenstein Reading *Capital*," 37.

24. RGALI 1923-2-1107, 133.

25. RGALI 1923-2-1104, 142.

26. RGALI 1923-2-1105, 125, and 1923-2-1104, 142.

27. RGALI 1923-2-1104, 143.

28. As is usual in Eisenstein's writing, the insertion of German signals a moment of conceptual emphasis. *Durcheinander* (through one another) points here both to the simultaneity of two historical epochs and toward the "interpenetration" of cognitive structures that the director would focus on in much of his later theoretical writings. Elena Vogman has suggested a possible allusion here to the Germanisms *nacheinander* and *nebeneinander* that Joyce employs in *Ulysses* (Vogman, *Dance of Values*, 99).

29. Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 5, 34.

30. Eizenshtein, "IA-28," 41.

31. RGALI 1923-2-1104, 136; Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 5, 33.

32. RGALI 1923-2-1104, 137.

33. Riggio and West, eds., *Dreiser's Russian Diary*, 101.

34. The various terms in Russian: *lozung*, *poniatie*, *formula*, *sententsia*, *polozhenie, tezis*. Anne Nesbet provides an analysis of the relationship between image and concept (*Bild* and *Begriff*) for Eisenstein's aesthetics of this time in her *Savage Junctures*, 77–93.

35. The recipe for what will constitute the new intellectual film appears differently in different places and often as a conflict between logic and image. For example, in the 1929 essay "Perspectives," Eisenstein takes up Plekhanov's terminology, interrogating the synthesis of the "language of logic" and the "language of image" that ought to lead to a language of the dialectic (Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 2, 36; see also Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 151–52).

36. RGALI 1923-2-1108, 105. "A pure synthesis will be achieved first in the Marx-Eisenstein film C*apital!!!*"

37. RGALI 1923-2-1108, 105. "(Just as the *Glass House* film must be maximally <u>impure</u>—through the 'clay bath' of the *Glass House* to the sun of the Marx film!) Through 'purgatory' to 'paradise'!"

38. Moussinac, *Sergei Eisenstein*, 28. See also Seton, *Eisenstein*, 122, in which she paraphrases a Julio Álvarez del Vayo interview with the director: "But Eisenstein said he would not begin this project [*Capital*] 'within two years.' Before he made such a film, he wished to go to America to orient himself."

2. *Glass House*

1. The film's basic premise came so organically to Eisenstein he worried that others might get to it before he did: On 29 July 1928, he writes, "Hurry child, hurry! After all someone else might come along and take it into their heads to shoot the thing!" (RGALI 1923-2-1109, 122).

2. See, for example, 1939's "El Greco y el cine" (Eizenshtein, *Montazh*, 404–63), 1937–40's "Montage and Architecture" (Eizenshtein, *Montazh*, 115–34), and 1947's "Piranesi, or the Fluidity of Forms" (Eizenshtein, *Neravnodushnaia priroda*, 150–93; Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 3, 156–91).

3. In what is the most thorough documentation of the relations between Eisenstein and Le Corbusier, *Le Corbusier and the Mystique of the USSR*, Jean-Louis Cohen quotes from a 1928 article on the architect's recent visit to Moscow (V. S., "Novaia klientura arkhitectora Lekorbiuz'e," *Sovietski ekran* no. 46 (1928), 5). There, Le Corbusier is reported to have said, upon viewing passages from Eisenstein's *The General Line*, "Architecture and the cinema are the only two arts of our time. In my own work I seem to think as Eisenstein does in his films. . . . In their ideas, his films resemble closely what I am striving to do in my own work." It is worth noting that the article in which this enthusiasm is reported is signed by the author V. S., whom Cohen credits as Vladimir Solev (Cohen, *Le Corbusier*, 49). Oksana Bulgakowa had determined, however, because of the article's similarity to drafts in Eisenstein's own archive, that V. S. and Vladimir Solev are pseudonyms for the director himself (Bulgakowa, *Sergei Eisenstein: A Biography*, 85, and RGALI 1923-1-978).

4. RGALI 1923-2-162, 19.

5. Iampol'skii, "Mifologiia stekla," 341.

6. See McQuaid, ed., *Envisioning Architecture*, 50, and Iampol'skii, "Mifologiia stekla," 340.

7. In Le Corbusier's work, "the biological instincts of individuals [were placed] under strict control by means of rational organization of architectural space" (Bulgakowa, *Sergej Eisenstein—Drei Utopien*, 111).

8. Chadaga, *Optical Play*, 154–69.

9. Some have claimed that Eisenstein may even have met Taut in the later 1920s, either in Berlin or during one of Taut's visits to Moscow (Iampol'skii, "Mifologiia stekla," 341).

10. That these architects appear here as models for Eisenstein and his *Glass House* is not accidental: in a speech that he wrote in Berlin and then delivered at La Sarraz, Switzerland, at the first Congress of Independent Filmmakers (September 1929), Eisenstein speaks of the architects that represent the necessary turn away from the debased and shallow imitation of reality found in Art Nouveau works and toward the more rational style that had come to replace it. He lists Le Corbusier, Gropius, and Taut by name (Eisenstein, "Imitation

as Mastery," 67–69). The speech, delivered at a time when *Glass House* was still at the top of Eisenstein's list of active projects, betrays not only his interest in contemporary movements in architecture but also the innovative uses of building materials that unified the work of these architects.

11. Pevsner, *Pioneers of Modern Design*, 214.

12. Murray, *Contemporary Curtain Wall Architecture*, 22. For relevant Eisenstein drawings, see, for example, RGALI 1923-2-162, 2–5.

13. RGALI 1923-2-162, 54–58, and RGALI 1923-2-1104, 24 and 43.

14. Kracauer, "Das Neue Bauen," 74 (cited in Ockman, "Between Ornament and Monument," 79).

15. See RGALI 1923-2-1104, 96: "The shadow of a couple in a deep embrace cast against the matte glass of a door (or better, on a door made from matte glass). All around is transparent, but one only sees the shadows on the doors, but not actually the people through the glass."

16. Hollister, "Glazing of the Crystal Palace," 104, 106.

17. Benjamin, *Selected Writings*, vol. 2, 734. Soo Hwan Kim has made a rewarding comparison of Eisenstein's and Benjamin's attitudes to glass in his 2021 essay "Cultural Genealogy of *The Glass House*."

18. Dostoevsky's "Winter Notes on Summer Impressions" includes a more apocalyptic account of Paxton's Crystal Palace, and Evgeny Zamiatin's 1921 dystopian novel *We* (first published in English in 1925) is rife with sinister employments of glass's qualities.

19. Marx, *Capital*: *A Critique of Political Economy*, vol. 1, 942.

20. Among others who have commented on this tension between utopia and dystopia in *Glass House*, Chadaga characterizes it, along with other representations of glass architecture, as both "dream and nightmare" (*Optical Play*, 162). Similar readings may be found in Bulgakowa, *Sergej Eisenstein: Drei Utopien*, 109–23, and Somaini, "Utopies et dystopies," 21–22.

21. I follow here a periodicity proposed by Naum Kleiman in his Russian-language publication of the *Glass House* notes in "*Stekliannyi dom*," 94–113. Oksana Bulgakowa and François Albéra both adhere to Kleiman's interpretation of these developing notes in their publications of the *Glass House* materials in German and French, respectively (Bulgakowa, "Glashaus" in *Eisenstein und Deutschland*, 17–38; and Albéra, "Introduction à *Glass House*," 7–15).

22. RGALI 1923-2-1104, 142.

23. RGALI 1923-2-1103, 13 (b).

24. Eisenstein makes frequent use of the word *spekuliatsia* for the term *competition* and seems to emphasize its syllabic correspondence with the *spec-* root found in *specular*, *spectacle*, and *spectator* (Eisenstein, "Imitation as Mastery," 69).

25. RGALI 1923-2-162, 27. This synopsis, dated 23 December 1928, and its later companion are found in the main *Glass House* work notebook. Significantly earlier, in a diary entry of 18 September 1927, Eisenstein had the idea to replace the razed glass house with an idealized collective village but was aware of the patness of such a concept (see RGALI 1923-2-1104, 29).

26. RGALI 1923-2-162, 43–45.

27. RGALI 1923-2-162, 60–61.

28. RGALI 1923-2-1104, 26. Oksana Bulgakowa characterizes the shift into more mythical territory substantial enough to move the film from the realm of comedy and into that of drama, from a "comedy of the eye" to a "drama of seeing" and finally to a "drama of behavior" (Bulgakowa, *Sergej Eisenstein: Drei Utopien*, 118–19).

29. Quoted in Kleiman, "*Stekliannyi dom*," 111.

30. Of all drawings Eisenstein made in the development of *Glass House*, none clearly depicts any of the archetypal characters that would be inserted into the later phases of the project. Effectively all drawings illustrate only the discrete visual episodes and not the subsequent attempt at story. This situation communicates, most likely, something of the director's fascination with the early rhetorical conception and visual possibility and his struggle with an actual, narratively viable screenplay structure.

31. RGALI 1923-2-1104, 25. Eisenstein's interest in the primordial quality of glass that emerges here can be seen in notes of February 1927 in which he writes that "glass belongs to primitive time and since it lives on beyond the borders of primitive time, it can only operate as primitive material" (RGALI 1923-2-162, 11–12).

32. RGALI 1923-2-162, 25.

33. By the definition that Eisenstein would later work out in his essay on Disney, glass appears here as supremely "plasmatic" (*plazmatichnyi*)—it rejects the constraint of form and maintains its freedom to "take on any form dynamically" (Eisenstein, *Disney*, 15).

34. This is a familiar Eisensteinian visual rhetoric that Ivan Aksenov ironized in his 1933 biography of the director by describing an invented proposal for a short educational film by Eisenstein on the topic of "how to light a stove" in which, as preparation for properly addressing the topic, the director was to have filmed every possibly type of stove "from every era and every nation"—from the ragged fires of the "troglodyte kitchens" of Altamira to the highly technical blast furnaces of Magnitogorsk. Again, in a movement from formlessness to rigidity, through a seeming infinite variation, the theme is developed (Aksenov, *Sergei Eizenshtein*, 89–90).

35. For example, in some pages from the *Glass House* plans that Eisenstein dictated to Grigorii Alexandrov (RGALI 1923-2-1916, 10–12), we see frosted windows, a glass floor replaced by a calm pool, lovers meeting on either side of a wall, and children and tigers encountering each other in a labyrinth of glass surfaces. The simultaneity of transparency and impenetrability works with particular dramatic force in one imagined scene: a writing desk in which a revolver is concealed but unreachable—a subversion of Chekhov's famous maxim—in this case its very visibility teases the fact that it can never be fired.

36. RGALI 1923-2-1916, 10–12. Alexandrov has notes on shattered glass and bullet holes punctuating the glass.

37. RGALI 1923-2-1103, 13b. Emma Widdis has analyzed the ways in which cinema was harnessed into the task of creating Soviet subjects with a revolutionary sensory relationship to their material environment. See, in particular, her analysis of the relationship of material to the individual Soviet subject, and specifically Viktor Shklovsky's writing about everyday materiality and

the viewing subject's relationship to the photographic object in essays such as 1927's "Wool, Glass, and Lace" (Widdis, *Socialist Senses*, 128–29).

38. An official letter from Fairbanks inviting Eisenstein to work in the United States arrived in Moscow on 1 December 1927 (Kleiman, "*Stekliannyi dom*," 94).

39. RGALI 1923-2-1103, 13b: "And the possibility, consequently, that this could be accepted into production by the Douglas Fairbanks Corporation."

40. RGALI 1923-2-1105, 72.

41. Ivor Montagu argues that the concept for *Glass House* was, though piercingly accurate as regards American society, "prophetic" enough in its diagnosis of the "indifference of man to his close-packed fellows" that it ought to have applied equally well to Europe and to "the general human condition" (Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 103).

42. RGALI 1923-2-1105, 72.

43. Julia Vaingurt has pointed out this important shifting point in Eisenstein's concept for the script, but she suggests that Eisenstein's relationship to the formulaic weight of the clichéd *polozhenie* is that of playful combination: "The essence of creativity is the play with these formulas, contrasting the unfreedom of crystallized life with its unlimited *ab ovo* potential" (Vaingurt, *Wonderlands of the Avant-garde*, 216). Vaingurt's interpretation of this aphorism as an imperative for "the artist to reimagine" convention seems generally accurate to a larger modernist project, but she does not connect the language specifically to Eisenstein's frequently expressed formal imperative to develop an entirely new film language that could carry such clear ideological "theses" [*polozhenia*].

44. RGALI 1923-2-162, 19.

45. For Eisenstein's thoughts on *tipazh* and the American-style star system, see 1926's "Kak ni stranno—O Khokhlovoi" (Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 5, 399–401), 1927's "Budushchee sovietskogo kino" (Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 5, 29–31), and "V boiakh za *Oktiabr'*" (Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 1, 136–40).

46. Perhaps it was the specific triangulation of social conflict, vulnerability to external observation, and a general dystopian mood that led to the erroneous suggestion, ascendant throughout some of the decades after Eisenstein's project became publicized, that the inspiration for Eisenstein's *Glass House* was Evgeny Zamiatin's *We*. Marie Seton cites Jay Leyda as a source for this rumor (Seton, *Eisenstein*, 171), which has since been roundly quashed. An important distinction between the two works is that in Zamiatin's, the glass buildings are components of an organized, totalitarian structure (emerging from an idealist, socialist technoregime) and external surveillance comes almost entirely from above, whereas in Eisenstein's *Glass House*, the building is an architectural manifestation of capital, and it is the private individual whose horizontal voyeurism is the more troubling process.

47. RGALI 1923-2-1107, 148.

48. Bulgakowa, "Eisenstein, the Glass House, and the Spherical Book." Compare "Komödie des Augens" in the original text of *Sergej Eisenstein: Drei Utopien*.

49. RGALI 1923-2-162, 7.

50. RGALI 1923-2-162, 19.

51. RGALI 1923-2-162, 6.

52. A brief note to this effect can be found in a diary entry of 16 November 1927: "As a sort of 'estrangement,' i.e. capturing the walls *as if they were there* . . . *fake it*" (RGALI 1923-2-1104, 146). This visual alienation and alteration (between absence and transparency), when paired with Eisenstein's intention to both deploy and reconfigure visual cliché, distinctly separates what he is attempting from what artists like Rodchenko in photography and Vertov in cinema had already been doing with "new angles" throughout the decade.

53. Eisenstein was not only interested in glass's quality of transparency, but also in the possibility of experimenting with fogged, textured, and black (opaque) glass (RGALI 1923-2-162, 20–21, and 1923–2–1109, 122).

54. RGALI 1923-2-162, 5.

55. RGALI 1923-2-162, 2.

56. RGALI 1923-2-162, 4. Here, as elsewhere, Eisenstein has meticulous ideas about the opaque visual elements and materials (porcelain, for example) of the mise-en-scène that can attract or guide the spectator's view. See also 1923-2-162, 5, where he writes (in English) "don't forget the compositional power of carpets thrown on the glass-flour [*sic*]" and 1923-2-1104, 146, in which he describes the effect of "Little safes in the walls—little material cubes in an airtight environment."

57. RGALI 1923-2-162, 21.

58. RGALI 1923-2-1104, 26. See also the second sketch from 1923-2-162, 50.

59. The first sketch from RGALI 1923-2-162, 50.

60. RGALI 1923-2-162, 24, and RGALI 1923-2-1104, 24.

61. RGALI 1923-2-1104, 95.

62. RGALI 1923-2-1104, 25.

63. RGALI 1923-2-1104, 24. In a note of 18 September 1927, alongside the sketched frontal form of a grieving human figure and a schematic foreshortened view labeled "from below," he writes, "*Kummer*. Mantegna." Of course, sorrow is the theme of Mantegna's painting, as it is in the relevant imagery from *Glass House*—moreover, the alienating use of extreme perspective is also meant as "a new angle" onto something essential in the depicted figure. Compare this with Eisenstein's description in "Pathos" of ways in which the 28mm lens had elsewhere allowed the filmmaker to shoot "in the manner of Mantegna," with an intense perspectival foreshortening (Eizenshtein, *Neravnodushnaia priroda*, 57).

64. RGALI 1923-2-162, 26, 33.

65. See also Bulgakowa, *Sergei Eisenstein: A Biography*, 63.

66. RGALI 1923-2-162, 24.

67. RGALI 1923-2-1104, 96.

68. The strictly psychological impulse toward viewing the other becomes physicalized and the implicit permission that the glass gives the viewer also becomes the instrument of their exposure.

69. RGALI 1923-1-1105, 72.

70. See RGALI 1923-2-162, 19, where Eisenstein writes, "This is where all of the attempts at finding new points of view will overlap. In terms both of shooting and of interpretation."

71. Such devices were fundamental as part of a larger formalist project of establishing a method for the scientific study of poetic language. Viktor Shklovsky's landmark 1925 *Theory of Prose* exemplifies this approach with its readings of realized metaphors in writers from Laurence Sterne to Andrei Bely; its final chapter ("Literature beyond 'Plot'") analyzes the prose works of Vasily Rozanov, noting the frequent appearance of revealed devices, in order to develop concepts of content-form relationships and literary inheritances between writers.

72. RGALI 1923-2-1104, 96.

73. RGALI 1923-2-1104, 25.

74. RGALI 1923-2-1109, 49.

75. RGALI 1923-2-1109, 49. In relation to these scenes and a racy "Glass House Revue" that was to have played at the café on the building's roof, Eisenstein produced several pages of sketches for costumes in which bared breasts were to have featured—for explicitly comic effect (RGALI 1923-2-163, 35–40, and 1923-2-1109, 77–79).

76. Concurrently with his envisioning of *Glass House*, Eisenstein was working out in his diaries a theory of realized metaphor in terms of cinematic mise-en-scène. From 25 February 1927: "Mise-en-scène is, moreover, the graphic literalization of an expression that is comprehended in the mind figuratively. Here, its role is identical to that of the word, which expresses a concept literally but is understood figuratively" (RGALI 1923-2-1103, 71–76).

77. Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 2, 60.

78. Eizenshtein, *Montazh*, 406.

79. RGALI 1923-2-1114, 55.

80. English is a notable exception, where *lens* is the term most universally used, though *photographic objective* is used in some more serious technical optical contexts.

81. RGALI 1923-2-1114, 55. *F: x"* signifies the "f number" or aperture, the amount of light let into the lens.

82. Aristotle, vol. 7, 911.

83. Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 63.

84. Michelson, "Reading Eisenstein Reading *Capital*," 35.

85. RGALI 1923-2-1104, 41.

86. RGALI 1923-2-162, 11–18.

87. Dziga Vertov, *Kino-Eye*, 16.

88. Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 62.

89. David C. Lindberg shows that da Vinci was instrumental in making this analogy between the physiology of the eye and the camera obscura. Unlike Descartes, though, "on no occasion does Leonardo assert or imply that the retina (or rear surface of the eye) is a screen, analogous to the back of the *camera*, onto which images are projected" (Lindberg, *Theories of Vision from Al-Kindi to Kepler,* 164).

90. Descartes, *Philosophical Writings*, vol. 1, 166 (as quoted in Jonathan Crary, *Techniques of the Observer*, 47).

91. RGALI 1923-2-1104, 96.

92. RGALI 1923-2-1104, 24.

93. RGALI 1923-2-1104, 25.
94. RGALI 1923-2-162, 20.
95. Chadaga, *Optical Play*, 154.
96. Eizenshtein, *Montazh*, 450–52.
97. Eizenshtein, *Neravnodushnaia priroda*, vol. 2, 523.
98. Kleiman, "*Stekliannyi dom*," 112.
99. The most famous Marxist "mystery play" is Vladimir Mayakovsky's *Misteriia Buff*, which also shares with *Glass House* a certain degree of visual grotesquerie and exaggerated character masks (Maiakovskii, vol. 2, 167–241). The bond with Mayakovsky's "bouffe" seems particularly convincing in some of Eisenstein's more burlesque costume designs (RGALI 1923-2-162, 35–41).
100. Budd Schulberg provides a secondhand account of the primary reason his father, studio executive B. P. Schulberg, encouraged Eisenstein to drop the project—a set that "would cost us a million dollars to build" (Schulberg, *Moving Pictures*, 369). Multiple sources report that Eisenstein enlisted the assistance of a Los Angeles psychoanalyst to try to release the writer's block that he had been experiencing with *Glass House*. This too was unsuccessful (Bulgakowa, *Sergei Eisenstein: A Biography*, 114; Montagu, *With Eisenstein*, 104; and Seton, *Eisenstein*, 171.
101. Eizenshtein, "K predissloviu dlia nesdelannykh veshchei," 6.

3. *Capital*

1. It seems particularly likely that Eisenstein would have been influenced by the ideological essays on theater and film written by Proletkult leader Platon Kerzhentsev (Bulgakowa, *Sergei Eisenstein: A Biography*, 47, 50; and Aumont, *Montage Eisenstein*, 163).
2. Seton, *Eisenstein*, 63, 115, 136.
3. The first Russian-language edition of *Dialectics of Nature* (a German-Russian dual-language version) appeared in the Marx-Engels-Lenin Institute's 1925 publication of the second volume of its *Marx-Lenin Archive*, and Lenin's *Philosophical Notebooks* began to appear in the institute's *Lenin Anthologies* (*Leninskie sborniki*) as of January 1929 (starting with volume 9) (Bulgakowa, *Sergei Eisenstein: A Biography*, 71, 88).
4. Vogman, *Dance of Values*, 199.
5. *Za bol'shoe kinoiskusstvo*, 140.
6. RGALI 1923-2-1104, 47. The "Americans" in question most likely would have included theater historian Henry Wadsworth Longfellow Dana, who had come to Moscow to research new developments in Russian theater. The name "Professor H. W. L. Dana" appears on the next page of Eisenstein's diary. See also Bulgakowa, *Sergei Eisenstein: A Biography*, 83; and Seton, *Eisenstein*, 114–15.
7. See RGALI 1923-2-1104, 32, and Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 5, 35. Eisenstein used *scenario* in his earlier notes, but he uses *libretto* here. Within the Soviet system of the late 1920s, these terms were in flux, but the libretto generally denoted a detailed synopsis on which a director's script might be based, whereas a scenario might come in multiple modes (literary, emotional, iron, et cetera)

and lengths (Belodubrovskaya, "The Literary Scenario and the Soviet Screenwriting Tradition," 262).

8. Ollman, *Dance of the Dialectic*, 12.

9. RGALI 1923-2-1107, 146.

10. RGALI 1923-1-292.

11. Compare with Eisenstein's statement "Cinema language is . . . the maximally laconic means of expression—in fifteen meters of film the idea of deity can be disqualified" (RGALI 1923-2-1107, 87).

12. RGALI 1923-2-1105, 123.

13. RGALI 1923-2-1107, 67–68. I have used the word *purpose* here for the Russian original *ustanovka*, which was a heavily coded term in the late 1920s. In constructivist circles and in Aleksei Gastev's Central Institute of Labor, its meanings might have included concepts such as *installation*, *device*, *apparatus*, *orientation*, and more. Though Eisenstein may have used the word with some of these implications in mind, the association is likely minimal (Gough, "Switched On," 47–50).

14. RGALI 1923-2-1107, 67.

15. Kleiman and Kozlov, Introduction to "S. M. Eizenshtein, *Iz neosushchestvlennykh zamyslov*," 56.

16. As a conceptual model for this task, Eisenstein thought of the Cassini Oval, which eloquently represents a complex geometrical phenomenon in a simple and dynamic graphic form (RGALI 1923-2-1107, 1; Eizenshtein, "IA-28," 40).

17. RGALI 1923-2-1104, 32. In "Our *October*," Eisenstein addresses the categories (heavily debated in the Soviet avant-garde press) of the "played" and the "non-played" film in great detail, asserting that his new work, *Capital*, was aimed at something that transcended these categories: "Truth stands with . . . *the beyond-played*. With cinema that stands *on the other side* of the played and the non-played" (Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 5, 32–35).

18. Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 2, 38.

19. Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 2, 38. For this and the above quotation, I have slightly altered the translation found in Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 153–54.

20. In his notes, Eisenstein refers to this process as "the *dynamic* reading of the static word" (RGALI 1923-2-1107, 11).

21. Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 2, 38.

22. On the relationship between ideology and the tension between form and content, Eisenstein notes on 4 April 1928, "In i[ntellectual] c[inema], *ideology* is, for the first time, not the central icon of a *triptych*, with 'form' on one side of it and 'content' on the other! Only here does ideology constitute a *constructive element* within the work: a *schema* that is indivisible from the work itself in the same way that a skeleton cannot be pulled out from a living organism" (RGALI 1923-2-1107, 51–52).

23. Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 2, 42. The Russian term Eisenstein uses here, in place of what he often refers to with the English *essay* in his notes, is *referat* (which might also be translated as *paper*, or even *abstract*), perhaps a somewhat more concise sibling of *traktat*.

24. RGALI 1923-2-1104, 32.

25. A notable analog in this attempt to activate a viewing audience's discursive potential can be seen in the concept of Eisenstein's former collaborator Sergei Tretiakov, the "discussion play" format, tested in his 1926–27 unstaged work *I Want a Baby!*, whose dramatic text, Tretiakov hoped, would provoke the viewing audience to interrupt the onstage action and burst into spontaneous political discussion (Kolchevska, "From Agitation to Factography," 392).

26. RGALI 1923-2-1104, 31. Elizabeth A. Papazian and Caroline Eades have used this passage in Eisenstein's notes and his concept of the collected essays to establish, following Béla Balász, a historical groundwork for the genre of the "essay film," which would develop into one of the later twentieth century's most important modes of discourse-oriented filmmaking (Papazian and Eades, Introduction to *The Essay Film*, 4–5, and Balász, *Early Film Theory*, 126–29).

27. See Barbusse's inscription (as transcribed by Eisenstein into his diary) in RGALI 1923-2-1107, 9: "To Eisenstein fraternally, your Henri Barbusse."

28. RGALI 1923-2-1107, 7. "L'instituteur" is one of the stories in the collection *Faits divers*.

29. R. T. H., review of *Faits divers*, by Henri Barbusse, 18.

30. RGALI 1923-2-1107, 7. Symptomatic of reading Barbusse in the original, Eisenstein uses the French term *essais* here, whereas he had used the English *essays* earlier (RGALI 1923-2-1104, 31).

31. RGALI 1923-2-1107, 74–75. This resonates with Eisenstein's emphasis in "IA-28" that the emotional attraction had been devised as "unconditional" and "direct," while the intellectual attraction was "deliberative" and "associative" (Eizenshtein, "IA-28," 47–48).

32. RGALI 1923-2-1107, 79.

33. See RGALI 1923-2-1916, 30–31, 24–25, 36–37, 3, 21–22, 16, 5, 8, respectively.

34. See RGALI 1923-2-1108, 92–95, 116, 124, 136–39, 175–76; 1923-2-1107, 67; 1923-2-1105, 57, 98–99, respectively.

35. The source of both the text and the drawing is Plate 2 ("Anglais en habit habillé"), drawn by Carle Vernet and engraved by Philibert Louis Debucourt from *Collection de costumes dessinés d'après nature*, vol. 1 (Paris: Charles Bance [Bance jeune], 1814–24).

36. RGALI 1923-2-1105, 104–6. Terentiev directed an adaptation of Sergei Simonov's novel of the same name at the theater of Dom Pechati in St. Petersburg. The production opened on 4 February 1928. The original publication of the review in question, which Eisenstein only partially inserts into the notebook, is S. Mokul'skii, "Natal'ia Tarpova v dome pechati," *Zhizn' iskusstvo* 11, no. 8 (17 February 1928), 8.

37. RGALI 1923-2-1107, 98, 117. Eisenstein would return to the topic of Terentiev's *Natalia Tarpova* production in his teaching at the Institute of Cinematography. He discusses the affective power of pre-Shakespearean theatrical narrative and Terentiev's "curious but unsuccessful" production in *IP*, vol. 4, 290.

38. RGALI 1923-2-1107, 161–63, and RGALI 1923-2-1108, 44–54.

39. RGALI 1923-2-1105, 19.

40. RGALI 1923-2-1107, 122. The need for such shallowness in the spinal story is punctuated multiple times in the notes (see also RGALI 1923-2-1105,

118–19). Eisenstein uses the somewhat unrecognizable word *fadnyi* here—most likely a borrowing of the French *fade* (vapid, insipid), which he substitutes for the Russian *poshlyi*. I am indebted to Naum Kleiman for his help with this reading.

41. RGALI 1923-2-1107, 125. This spatial conceptualization along two axes of discourse, with horizontal and vertical vectors intersecting, has also been used by Frederic Jameson in his analysis of *Capital* (Jameson, "Marx and Montage," 112).

42. RGALI 1923-2-1107, 123. Eisenstein quotes from Ywan Goll's German-language description of Joyce's structural digressions in his 1927 article *Der Homer unserer Zeit*.

43. RGALI 1923-2-1107, 143. Eisenstein explored splitting the dedication: to dedicate the formal aspect to Joyce and to make the official dedication to the Second International. For compelling thoughts on why the director may have chosen the Second International (which had been dissolved in 1916) and *not* the Third International (Comintern), which was still ongoing, see Goodwin, "Eisenstein, Ecstasy, Joyce, and Hebraism," 539.

44. RGALI 1923-2-1107, 132.

45. RGALI 1923-2-1107, 126.

46. RGALI 1923-2-1107, 130.

47. RGALI 1923-2-1107, 130.

48. RGALI 1923-2-1107, 130–31.

49. RGALI 1923-2-1107, 131–32.

50. RGALI 1923-2-1107, 123.

51. The main narrative of food production, distribution, consumption, and excretion is apt for this depiction of transport and transformation. Another note seizes on George Grosz's description of army-rationed desserts ("mousse") as corrosive enough to eat away tablecloth on which it was spattered but still digestible by the human stomach (RGALI 1923-2-1107, 142–43).

52. Eisenstein frequently cites a passage from Friedrich Engels about the complexities of nature, history, and intellectual activity: "We see . . . at first the picture as a whole, with its individual parts still more or less kept in the background; we observe the movements, transitions, connections, rather than the things that move, combine, and are connected" (Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, 79–80). See, for example, Eizenshtein, *Metod*, vol. 1, 264, where the director distills Engels's thought as "first the movement, then *the thing* that moves."

53. Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 2, 58. Eisenstein takes his quotation from Lenin's conspectus of Hegel's *Science of Logic*. The work was included in volume 9 of the 1929 "*Leninskii sbornik*."

54. Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 2, 59.

55. Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 139 (Eisenstein, *IP*, vol. 2, 284.).

56. RGALI 1923-2-1107, 145.

57. Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 2, 316.

58. A third instance of this basic method of perpendicularity comes in the August 1928 essay "An Unexpected Juncture," where Eisenstein analyzes what he sees as the conceptual and aesthetic virtues of the Japanese Kabuki theater,

in which "sound, movement, space, and voice *do not accompany* (or even parallel) one another, but are treated as *equivalent elements*" (Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 117).

59. Eisenstein's boundlessly flexible principle of montage can devour (like Saturn) and redefine its previous instances—in this case, reforming itself in order to traffic in complex philosophical concepts. Annette Michelson observes, in her reading of *Capital*, that montage is "a totalizing principle, extended to all parameters susceptible to organization" (Michelson, "Reading Eisenstein Reading *Capital*," 30).

60. RGALI 1923-2-1107, 133.

61. RGALI 1923-2-1107, 130.

62. RGALI 1923-2-1107, 146–47.

63. Sovkino was the Moscow studio to which Eisenstein's *Capital* project had been assigned (RGALI 1923-1-293).

64. RGALI 1923-2-1108, 23.

65. RGALI 1923-2-1108, 24.

66. RGALI 1923-2-1107, 47.

67. RGALI 1923-2-1107, 134. More of Eisenstein's thoughts on Alexandra Khokhlova may be found in "Kak ni stranno—O Khokhlovoi" (*IP*, vol. 5, 399–401).

68. Eisenstein's adjustment, reinscribing emotion ("warm" or otherwise) into the framework of the intellectual film, was apparently fully accomplished by 1930. In a lecture he delivered at the Sorbonne in early 1930, the director decries the contemporary dualism established between thought and emotion, proclaiming his method as one in which "a series of shots, selected in a certain way, provokes certain emotions, which in turn arouse certain ideas" (*IP*, vol. 1, 552). Béla Balász comments that this "concern with emotions . . . reveals [Eisenstein] as an artist whose aim is not to import reason into the emotions, but to transport emotion into purely scientific thinking" (Balász, *Early Film Theory*, 151).

69. Eisenstein describes in a note of 4 April 1928 how his China–Egypt–New York sequence frightened Alexandrov (RGALI 1923-2-1107, 79).

70. The final clause is in French, "*Ça viendra*!" RGALI 1923-2-1107, 68.

71. RGALI 1923-2-1104, 142.

72. As further evidence to this tendency to blend the material and the ideal, Eisenstein writes (in English) in a 1929 note on dynamism, movement, and the dialectic, that mimetic conflict produces reflexive identification—a material response. "Here we have the making of a new *realism* a new *transcendental function* by two fictions, the result of the conflict is real within us and not artificial" (RGALI 1923-2-1114, 61b).

73. Eisenstein remarks on the common ground between his own and Joyce's operations of plot in a November 1927 entry in his work notebook: "Deanecdotalization—*c'est probablement le plus moderne de c'qu'il y a. P. ex. The Portrait of an Artist as a Young Man* by James Joyce is constructed completely according to this manner of handling narrative material. How curious that (just as it is with me) this is necessarily accompanied by an extreme physiological materiality in the close-ups. With Joyce, this physiological quality is directed toward a (constant) specification of odors and to the odors of decay *par excellence*" (RGALI 1923-2-1105, 24).

74. Eisenstein, moreover, was not alone in sensing the similarity between his own developing method—and of cinematic technique generally—and that of Joyce's novel. In his 1935 essay "Novels of Strangeness and Theater of Montage," Ernst Bloch called montage "the key" to *Ulysses*'s strangeness and elsewhere referred to it as a "grotesque-montage of the late bourgeoisie" (quoted in Weninger, "James Joyce in German-Speaking Countries: The Early Reception, 1919–1945," 42–43). It follows, then, that Joycean interior monologue, if seen as a montage of images, concepts, and attractions, could easily be read as a sort of lyrical cognitive dialectic.

75. This detail appears in his 1932 essay "What V. I. Lenin Gave Me" (*IP*, vol. 5, 533–34).

76. Kleiman, "Neosushchestvlennye zamysli Eizenshteina," 13. Stalin is hardly the only prominent figure to have thought Eisenstein's idea absurd. Osip Brik's published opinion in the April 1928 issue of *Novyi Lef* (that the attempt would only bring "painful tears and futile attempts to jump higher than [Eisenstein's] own head") was a symptomatic response (Brik, "*Oktiabr'* Eizenshteina," 29).

77. Viacheslav Ivanov, *Izbrannye trudy po semiotike i istorii kul'tury*, vol. 1, 149.

78. All this is reported in Alexandrov's 1939 essay "Velikii drug sovetskoi kinematografii" and is partially repeated (in a far more measured tone) in his 1976 autobiography *Epokha i kino* (see Aleksandrov, *Epokha i kino*, 107). Eisenstein's recollection of the meeting with Stalin is much more circumspect. He reports in the essay "What V. I. Lenin Gave Me," that the discussion with the leader led to the "deferment" of the *Capital* project in favor of "higher-priority assignments" (which must be understood as the completion of *The General Line*). The specifics of his priority is discussed in part II of this book.

Part II. Objective/Subjective

1. Vertov's *Enthusiasm* and Room's *Plan of the Great Works* (both 1930) are considered to be the first features conceived and produced as sound films, and Ekk's *Road to Life* (1931), the first true "talkie."

2. See RGALI 1923-2-162, 46. To a note detailing the disjuncture in visible realities between neighboring glass cubicles (a beating in one, rote housework in the next), Eisenstein writes, "emphasize this with sound: nothing can be heard through the glass." He writes the original in French: "souligner par le son: on n'entend rien à travers la verre." This note was written in May 1930, already well into his westward sojourn, and much closer to the actual possibility of a sound production for the project. Nevertheless, there are no other notes that show anything approaching a sound concept in Eisenstein's imagination of the film.

3. This comes in the essay "The Eighth Art. On Expressionism, America and, of course, Chaplin," cowritten with Sergei Yutkevich (Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 29–32).

4. Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 114 (Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 2, 316).

5. Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 114 (Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 2, 316).

6. Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 114 (Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 2, 316).

7. Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 117 (Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 5, 305).

8. Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 114 (Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 2, 316).

9. Such were potential outcomes in the sound script Eisenstein devised for *The General Line*, as will be discussed.

10. Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 186 (Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 2, 50).

11. Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 186 (Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 2, 50).

12. Bulgakowa, *Sergei Eisenstein: A Biography*, 90.

13. These notes are reproduced in Leyda and Voynow, *Eisenstein at Work*, 38–40. See also Moussinac, *Sergei Eisenstein*, 35.

14. Leyda and Voynow, *Eisenstein at Work*, 40.

15. The audio theorist Douglas Kahn has referred to the *General Line* soundtrack as "a wish list freed from practicality" (Kahn, *Noise, Water, Meat*, 147–48).

16. Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 5, 534, and Alexandrov, *Epokha i kino*, 107. Lilya Kaganovsky reminds us that Alexandrov presents a kind of counternarrative to Eisenstein on the trip westward: "Alexandrov plays down the role the acquisition of new sound technology played in their going abroad, claiming instead that his was a trip meant to bolster the relationship between the USSR and the West" (Kaganovsky, *Voice of Technology*, 15).

17. The first quotation is from a letter to Pera Atasheva, quoted in Bulgakowa, *Sergei Eisenstein: A Biography*, 103; the second is from a letter to Léon Moussinac, quoted in Moussinac, *Sergei Eisenstein*, 53–54.

18. A fascinating volley of aesthetic claiming and disclaiming of Eisenstein followed the short film's release. For example, Hans Richter asserted that Eisenstein had not *actually* participated in the film's direction (see Bulgakowa, *Sergei Eisenstein: A Biography*, 103), while, on the other hand, Luis Buñuel rebuts that although "Eisenstein's friends have tried to blame Alexandrov for the debacle. . . . I saw Eisenstein making it with my own eyes, since he was shooting it on the stage next to me when I was making *L'âge d'or*" (Aranda, *Luis Buñuel*, 86–87).

19. RGALI 1923-2-1115, 1.

20. Eikhenbaum, "Problems of Cinema Stylistics," 62 (Eikhenbaum, *Problemy kinostilistiki*, 25).

21. Vygotsky, *Thought and Language*, 249 (Vygotskii, *Myshlenie i rech'*, 311).

22. Eikhenbaum, "Problems of Cinema Stylistics," 62 (*Problemy kinostilistiki*, 25).

23. Eikhenbaum, "Problems of Cinema Stylistics," 61 (*Problemy kinostilistiki*, 24).

24. Ian Christie describes it this way: "the plasticity and allusiveness of inner speech [would be] suppressed and replaced by a pre-formed, externalized address *from* the screen, which would make the spectator little more than a passive eavesdropper" (Christie, "Making Sense of Early Soviet Sound," 179).

25. According to Oksana Bulgakowa, Eisenstein became personally acquainted with Vygotsky in 1925 and then read his *Psychology of Art*; later, in 1928, he developed a working group together with Vygotsky and Alexander Luria to study sign systems in cinema (Bulgakowa, *Sergei Eisenstein: A Biography*, 60, 88). The various evolutions of "inner speech" as proposed by Vygotsky and assimilated by Eikhenbaum and Eisenstein (among others) have been

addressed in work by Paul Willemen, David Bordwell, Karla Oeler, Emily Tall, Marina Burke, and Ana Hedberg Olenina.

26. Moussinac, *Sergei Eisenstein*, 40. In a 1954 essay on the origins of the literary device of interior monologue, Gleb Struve makes the unexpected connection from Joyce and his contemporary, Larbaud (see the subsequent footnote), back to the Russian tradition, and specifically to the critic and novelist Nikolai Chernyshevsky (who had observed interior monologue in certain passages of Tolstoy). Struve writes, "We see that, long before Larbaud, the formula of *monologue intérieur* was used by a Russian critic. . . . What is more, he gave it more or less the same meaning. He regarded inner monologue as a novel and striking device, full of possibilities in enlarging the scope of psychological notation, in conveying the 'dialectic of the mind.'" In this formulation, the correspondences between Eisensteinian intellectual montage and interior monologue become obvious. Struve highlights Chernyshevsky's conception of the technique as a way of showing "the emergence of thoughts" and "couplings of ideas and sensations." Struve also asserts that Andrei Bely practiced the technique in *Kotik Letaev*, several years before Joyce began to experiment with it in *A Portait of the Artist as a Young Man*, a thought that no doubt would have resonated with Eisenstein, an enthusiastic reader of Bely (Struve, "Monologue Intérieur," 1107–8).

27. This description of Joyce's interior monologue is from the French writer Valéry Larbaud, who wrote the introduction to and oversaw the first translation of *Ulysses* into French (Published by La Maison des Amis des Livres, 1929) and is quoted in Gilbert, *James Joyce's Ulysses*, 11–12.

28. In her essay on Eisenstein's assimilation of Joycean interior monologue, Karla Oeler has shown how the filmmaker's interest in Vygotsky and inner speech dovetailed with his developing interest in the writing of Joyce—and how the director began to see a literal connection between Vygotsky's psychological concept and Joyce's literary device. Oeler precisely frames the distinction between the writer's intention and the filmmaker's as "Joyce aims to show inner speech; Eisenstein aims to bequeath it" (Oeler, "Collective Interior Monologue," 474.

29. Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 236 (Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 2, 78).

30. In a diary entry of 30 July 1928, Eisenstein describes his position specifically: "I saw Shklovsky today at Shub's place. I truly love him. He is against the sound film! In our debate, I was opposed to his contention that talking cinema is a *synthesis* of sound and the visual image. I recalled a similar argument with [theater director E. P.] Prosvetov about this *same thing* in theater (1922). The sound of an actor is only one discrete element of movement and we perform equivalent montage upon it as upon all other movements. There is no *confrontation*. . . . I understand sound in cinema *in the same way*, as a monosemantic member unit of the montage chain" (RGALI 1923-2-1109, 143–44). Shklovsky, like Eikhenbaum and others, had initially been opposed to the introduction of sound in film, a position that would shift, however, by the end of the decade (see his 1930 essay "Zvuk—smyslovoi znak").

31. Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 114 (Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 2, 316).

32. RGALI 1923-2-168, 52.

33. Eizenshtein, "K predisloviu," 6.

34. Both scripts were published with biographical comments by Montagu in *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*. Copies are also held in the Museum of Modern Art Eisenstein archive in New York as well as in Moscow's RGALI.

4. *Sutter's Gold*

1. The Cendrars novel was published as Sandrar, *Zoloto*, in a translation by Ol'ga Broshniovskaia. In his critical biography of Cendrars, Jay Bochner includes a reproduction of the cover of this early Russian translation and writes, "Cover of the 1926 Russian edition of *L'Or*, hitherto unknown even to Cendrars, who thought it might have been published in 1929" (Bochner, *Blaise Cendrars*, vii).

2. Although Cendrars's name does not appear in the detailed datebook that Eisenstein kept during his January–May stay in Western Europe, and no description of the meeting appears in any of the director's reminiscences, Cendrars himself refers to their previous "breakfast in Paris" in a September 1930 letter to Eisenstein (Atasheva and Zemskov, "Pis'ma k Sergeiu Mikhailovichu Eizenshteinu," *Inostrannaia literatura*, vol. 1 (1958): 247). Some have suggested that during this meeting Eisenstein went as far as personally securing the rights to make a film of the novel (on this, see Bergan, *Sergei Eisenstein*, 205)—but the tone of Cendrars's commiseration with Eisenstein in the letter, in which he refers to the meeting (written and sent after *Sutter's Gold* had been shelved) implies that the discussion of any such arrangement is extremely unlikely.

3. RGALI 1923-1-693. Zweig's condensed telling of the Sutter story, meant to explore the fateful moment "in which a decision outlasting time is made on a single day, in a single hour, often just a minute" (Zweig, *Genius and Discovery*, 8) is itself largely based on Cendrars's novel, which had appeared two years previously. At the end of Zweig's tragic miniature, he writes, "Only an artist, Blaise Cendrars, has at least given the forgotten John Augustus Sutter the only right belonging to a grand fate, the right to amazed remembrance by posterity" (Zweig, *Genius and Discovery*, 141). As Rostislav Iurenev points out, the treatment based on Zweig, and the acknowledgment of Cendrars and his *L'Or* within the Zweig original, almost certainly suggest that the first moment the idea of a film based on Sutter's exploits occurred to Eisenstein was *before* meeting Cendrars in Paris (Iurenev, *Sergei Eizenshtein*, vol. 2, 10).

4. Eisenstein, *Beyond the Stars*, 828–29 (Eizenshtein, *Memuary*, vol. 2, 408.

5. Bulgakowa, *Sergei Eisenstein: A Biography*, 106. Titles that Lasky would suggest to Eisenstein included works by some of Eisenstein's favorite writers: Zola's *Germinal*, France's *Revolt of the Angels*, and Dos Passos's *Manhattan Transfer*, as well as Karel Capek's *R.U.R.*, Bernhard Kellerman's *The Tunnel*, and biographies of Al Capone and John Brown. Lasky himself was born and raised in San Francisco; perhaps the novel of the California Gold Rush had a special importance for him.

6. Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 101 and 105. It is a safe assumption that the polyglot Eisenstein would have read the novel in its original French.

7. Quoted in Frayling, *Spaghetti Westerns*, 5. Iurenev writes of *L'Or*, "Blaise Cendrars . . . wrote his novel in the form of painterly pictures, full of stormy action, literally asking to be put on screen" (Iurenev, *Sergei Eizenshtein*, vol. 2, 15).

8. Though he never directed a film of his own, Cendrars did act as assistant director to Abel Gance on two of that director's major works, *J'accuse* (1919) and *La roue* (1923), collaborations that have led some to speculate, perhaps imaginatively, about a possible chain of cinema influence issuing from Cendrars's elliptical literary stylistics to Gance's rapid editing techniques to Eisenstein's complex montage in *Potemkin* (White, introduction to *Hollywood*, by Blaise Cendrars, xxxi). See also Jay Bochner's observation about *J'accuse* that "Cendrars has often been credited with the concepts of quick cutting for the train sequences which made the film an avant-garde classic in editing and even subject matter four years before Eisenstein's *Potemkin*. Gance's previous work, epic in intention but thoroughly sentimental and hardly inventive, lends credence to the influence of the poet" (Bochner, *Blaise Cendrars*, 63).

9. Bochner writes that *L'Or* explores "a single, linear, willful line of action," and that "the effect is definitely cinematic" (Bochner, *Blaise Cendrars*, 150–51). The historian of the Hollywood western Christopher Frayling writes of *L'Or* that "Each of the major 'set-pieces' . . . is compounded of a series of 'visual' impressions, arranged in the form of a collage (Frayling, *Spaghetti Westerns*, 16).

10. RGALI 1923-2-164.

11. RGALI 1923-2-164, 10.

12. Sarah Gleeson-White remarks, alluding to Frayling's characterization of the project as "an experiment with sound" on par with that of the later *¡Que viva México!* (Frayling, *Spaghetti Westerns*, 18), that "the possibilities of sound that Eisenstein imagined are everywhere inscribed in his *Sutter's Gold* scenario. . . . [The] experiment's most notable components include the frequent counterpoint of sound and image as well as its purely sonic montage sequences" (Gleeson-White, "Auditory Exposures," 136).

13. Seton, *Eisenstein*, 172, and Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 106. Eisenstein's own lyrical remembrance of his time researching the script in Northern California (and encountering daguerreotypes from the period) can be found in *Beyond the Stars*, 291–96 (*Memuary*, vol. 1, 250–55).

14. RGALI 1923-2-170, 5 and 9–12; Sergei Mikhailovich Eisenstein Collection [A.17], the Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York. Little sense of an accompanying sound world is apparent in the drawings either, though one page in the MoMA collection does append the notation "Sound. 'Swiss' chorus. 'Yodling' [*sic*]" at the bottom of a page of drawings illustrating the film's opening sequence.

15. Eisenstein, *Beyond the Stars*, 663 (Eizenshtein, *Memuary*, vol. 2, 194). Eisenstein recalls this time beneath the sequoias as "Autumn 1930," but his memory is mistaken—it would have happened sometime in late July or early August of that year. Stuart Gilbert's annotated guide to Joyce's novel, *James Joyce's Ulysses*, was originally published in 1930.

16. This image of afflatus beneath the redwoods—Eisenstein reading *Ulysses* while ostensibly adapting *L'Or*—recalls his immediate preparations for *Strike* or

October. Then, too, rather than read the documentary material from which the films' narratives had arisen, he instead prepared by reading the novel by Zola—*Germinal* or *La débâcle*—whose essence and movement most corresponded to the project in preparation (Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 95).

17. Eisenstein, *Beyond the Stars*, 663 (Eizenshtein, *Memuary*, vol. 2, 194).

18. Eisenstein, *Beyond the Stars*, 667 (Eizenshtein, *Memuary*, vol. 2, 197). See original in Gilbert, *James Joyce's Ulysses*, 253.

19. Eisenstein, *Beyond the Stars*, 668 (Eizenshtein, *Memuary*, vol. 2, 198). See original in Gilbert, *James Joyce's Ulysses*, 257.

20. Richardson, "Eisenstein and California," 196.

21. Ivor Montagu describes this process, of which he was an indispensable part, more than once in his memoir (Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 106–7 and 342–43; this quotation is from 342).

22. RGALI 1923-2-168, 1 (Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 151).

23. RGALI 1923-2-168, 1 (Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 151).

24. RGALI 1923-2-168, 1 (Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 151–52).

25. RGALI 1923-2-164, 1.

26. RGALI 1923-2-168, 2 (Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 152).

27. RGALI 1923-2-168, 3 (Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 154).

28. Eisenstein's version of the scene is attuned obsessively to the interplay of sound and vision, while Cendrars's prose description of Sutter's first appearance is detached and explanatory, typical of their divergence in sensory method. For example: "Suddenly, these peaceable country folk were thrown into consternation by the arrival of a stranger. Even in broad daylight, a stranger is something of a rarity in this little village of Rünenberg in the canton of Basle, but what were they to make of a stranger who turned up at such an unheard-of hour, so late in the evening, just as the sun was going down?" (Cendrars, *Gold*, 8).

29. In the milieu of rampant capitalism, the "mob" inevitably becomes a destructive, mindless force, in contrast with the "mass" hero that had taken the role of central protagonist in almost all of Eisenstein's previous films.

30. RGALI 1923-2-168, 43–46 (Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 198–200).

31. RGALI 1923-2-168, 48 (Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 202).

32. RGALI 1923-2-168, 52 (Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 205).

33. But the scene is not just self-referential—it is mapped out just as in the original (Cendrars, *Gold*, 126–27).

34. RGALI 1923-2-168, 52 (Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 206).

35. Especially if we take this unseen voice, as some have, as the voice of the filmmaker himself. On this point, see Iurenev, *Sergei Eizenshtein*, vol. 2, 20. The voice could also be received as a perfect instance of what cinema sound theorist Michel Chion has called the *acousmêtre*. The speaker, like a Pythagorean master speaking behind a curtain, is unseen, invested with magical powers, and "haunt[s] the borderlands that are neither the interior of the filmic stage nor the proscenium—a place that has no name, but which the cinema forever brings into play" (Chion, *The Voice in Cinema*, 19–24).

36. The text of one of the short early treatments of *Sutter's Gold* punctuates this moment with the final words "Modern state." Whether they were to appear onscreen at the end is unclear (RGALI 1923-2-165, 18).

37. RGALI 1923-2-168, 7 (Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 159).

38. As Montagu suggests, this is the great innovation of Eisenstein's Hollywood scripts, freedom from "the exact correspondence of image and its natural causally associated sound." He claims that "Only Eisenstein at that time visualized the full possibilities of film where music is not an accompaniment or an interruption but an integral part of the whole creation" (Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 108).

39. RGALI 1923-2-168, 37 (Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 191).

40. RGALI 1923-2-168, 3–4 (Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 154–55).

41. RGALI 1923-2-168, 49–50 (Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 203).

42. Marina Burke has characterized this technique as an aural "double exposure" and has applied it generally to the interaction of audio and visual in Eisenstein's sound films (Burke, "Eisenstein and the Challenge of Sound"). Sarah Gleeson-White has also commented on this feature of the *Sutter's Gold* script (Gleeson-White, "Auditory Exposures," 136–37).

43. RGALI 1923-2-168, 47 (Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 201).

44. RGALI 1923-2-168, 15 (Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 166).

45. RGALI 1923-2-168, 40–41 (Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 194–95).

46. This silence works as an intensification of what Eisenstein discussed as the value of contrasting silence in *silent cinema* in his 1929 essay "The Form of the Script" (Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 135).

47. RGALI 1923-2-168, 12 (Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 163).

48. RGALI 1923-2-168, 14 (Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 165).

49. RGALI 1923-2-168, 52 (Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 205).

50. RGALI 1923-2-168, 16 (Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 168).

51. RGALI 1923-2-168, 8–9 (Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 159–60).

52. RGALI 1923-2-168, 10, 16 (Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 161, 168).

53. Iurenev, *Sergei Eizenshtein*, vol. 2, 21.

54. RGALI 1923-2-168, 4 (Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 155).

55. RGALI 1923-2-168, 10 (Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 162).

56. RGALI 1923-2-168, 19 (Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 170).

57. RGALI 1923-2-168, 47–48 (Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 201–2).

58. RGALI 1923-2-168, 32 (Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 185).

59. RGALI 1923-2-168, 36 (Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 188).

60. RGALI 1923-2-168, 6 (Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 158).

61. RGALI 1923-2-168, 6 (Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 158).

62. RGALI 1923-2-168, 23 (Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 175–76).

63. RGALI 1923-2-168, 33–34 (Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 185–86).

64. RGALI 1923-2-168, 29–30 (Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 182–83).

65. RGALI 1923-2-168, 51–52 (Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 204–5).

66. Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 236 (Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 2, 78.)

67. The *Sutter's Gold* script was praised by the same studio executives who were passing on its production. The project also had some high-profile supporters such as Charlie Chaplin and King Vidor, some of Eisenstein's most loyal new friends. Chaplin thought it was "very fine" and later praised it in his autobiography; Vidor considered it evidence that Eisenstein was "ahead of his time" (Chaplin, *My Autobiography*, 319, and Swallow, *Eisenstein*, 92.

68. Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 109. Cendrars's novel remained a studio property; for more on subsequent attempts at its adaptation, both successful and unsuccessful, see Gleeson-White, "Auditory Exposures," 132, and Frayling, *Spaghetti Westerns*, 10.

69. Eisenstein, *Beyond the Stars*, 292 (Eizenshtein, *Memuary*, vol. 1, 251). Eisenstein's opinion on the ideological objection of Paramount has been echoed widely. See, for example, Seton, *Eisenstein*, 172, and Richardson, "Eisenstein and California," 199.

70. Bleiman, "Plodotvornost' oshibki," 72.

5. *An American Tragedy*

1. Sergei Eisenstein Collection [D.8], The Museum of Modern Art Archives, New York.

2. Eisenstein [A.6], MoMA Archives, New York.

3. Eisenstein [A.14], MoMA Archives, New York. The literary device that Eisenstein envisions employing here—of offering the character's unmediated thoughts explicitly and directly to the viewer—has for the last century been referred to somewhat interchangeably with the terms interior monologue, internal monologue, and inner monologue. For the sake of consistency, and except where I quote sources that use a different variant (as in this instance), I have chosen to use interior monologue in this book.

4. Eisenstein [A.14], MoMA Archives, New York.

5. Dreiser describes having visited Eisenstein in his Moscow apartment in 1927 (Riggio and West, *Dreiser's Russian Diary*, 100–101). Eisenstein recalls the meeting somewhat sheepishly and admits that, ignorant of the work of the famous American writer, he had to quickly read through several of Dreiser's novels the night before the meeting (Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 5, 526). The two met again in 1930 in New York City and, apparently, at Dreiser's estate Iroki in upstate New York (Eizenshtein, *Memuary*, vol. 1, 24; Eisenstein, *Beyond the Stars*, 11). There is no indication that the two had independently discussed adaptation or collaboration.

6. Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 116. Such awareness is indicated by a line in the note that Eisenstein attached to the draft delivered for studio review: "*Honi soit qui mal y pense*." A French idiom roughly translating to "Shame on him who thinks evil of this." Bergan, *Sergei Eisenstein*, 210.

7. Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 118.

8. Mary Seton transcribed and ultimately included in her biography of Eisenstein a telling moment from a 1934 lecture at VGIK by the director, in which he claimed that the era had dictated his shift from the mass to the individual hero: "In 1925 it was very important to create collectivity in the cinema. Now it is important to show individuals in the collective. The tendency in *Potemkin* was correct for its time. It showed the mass; the red and the white. The importance of every picture is that it should solve and reflect the historical problems put forth in its day" (Seton, *Eisenstein*, 491).

9. Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 2, 100–101. It is worth noting that Eisenstein does not mention the other two important film projects that intervene chronologically in the progression from *The General Line* to the American films *Glass House* and *Capital*, neither of which was conceived with a central hero and whose episodic natures depended on a freedom to move from space to space and context to context.

10. In his lectures at VGIK, Eisenstein would even refer to John Sutter, Henri Christophe of *Black Majesty*, and Basil Zakharov of *The Man of Darkness* each as a superman character, one who reaches a tragic end just as he differentiates himself from the rest of a homogeneous society (Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 4, 321–22).

11. Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 2, 101–2.

12. Some of the enthusiasm on the part of Lasky and Schulberg, and their wish to see the film made quickly, may be accounted for by the fact that although the studio had held the rights to the novel's adaptation since 1926, Lasky had only just renegotiated the terms of this contract, originally made to produce a silent film, to now include sound rights (Donald Prizer, ed., *Theodore Dreiser's An American Tragedy*, 292).

13. Selznick, *Memo from: David O. Selznick*, 27.

14. Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 2, 70 (Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 228). When *An American Tragedy* was eventually made by Joseph von Sternberg, under Lasky's supervision, Eisenstein's assessment was that Sternberg had simply followed studio instructions and "rejected everything that [their] script was based on, . . . orienting everything toward an 'open and shut case' police story" (Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 2, 79 (Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 237).

15. Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 2, 78 (Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 235).

16. Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 2, 76 (Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 234).

17. RGALI 1923-2-173, 16.

18. RGALI 1923-2-173, 46–47. In this ecstatic moment, the lovers are also suddenly transported in their subjectivities to some outdoor space, as the ceiling and walls of Roberta's apartment vanish.

19. RGALI 1923-2-173, 59.

20. RGALI 1923-2-173, 125.

21. RGALI 1923-2-173, 126.

22. RGALI 1923-2-173, 2.

23. Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 232–33.

24. RGALI 1923-2-173, 132.

25. Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 114.

26. Eizenshtein, *Metod*, vol. 1, 409; Eisenstein, *The Primal Phenomenon: Art*, 193. Elsewhere, Eisenstein writes that "the crime committed by Griffiths was the summary result of the social relationships whose influence he had been subjected to at every stage of the development of his life and character that unfolded in the course of the film" (Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 2, 69–70 [Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 228]).

27. Moussinac, *Sergei Eisenstein*, 52.

28. Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 2, 70 (Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 228). In a lecture at VGIK in autumn 1934, Eisenstein claimed that "when writers give the whole of reality and do not organize it, then you in adapting such a book for the cinema must select a form. In *An American Tragedy*, Dreiser included everything. This method is very impressive, but it does not equal material which is selected and organized" (Seton, *Eisenstein*, 492–93).

29. Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 2, 73 (Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 231).

30. Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, xxi–xxii.

31. Warren, "An Homage to *An American Tragedy*," 22–23.

32. Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 2, 77 (Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 235). Although Eisenstein cites Joyce, Dujardin, and Larbaud as the originators of such "sliding" between objective and subjective in style and construction, he argues that, as "an object of description, but not a method of it," the same tendency can be found in romantics such as Hoffman, Novalis, and Nerval.

33. Eizenshtein, *Metod*, vol. 1, 328–29 (Eisenstein, *Primal Phenomenon*, 79).

34. Eizenshtein, *Metod*, vol. 1, 94.

35. Eizenshtein, *Metod*, vol. 1, 376–77 (Eisenstein, *Primal Phenomenon*, 115).

36. Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 2, 78 (Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 235).

37. Eisenstein [A.14], MoMA Archives, New York.

38. Dreiser, *American Tragedy*, vol. 2, 42.

39. Dreiser, *American Tragedy*, vol. 2, 75.

40. Dreiser, *American Tragedy*, vol. 2, 75.

41. Dreiser, *American Tragedy*, vol. 2, 78.

42. RGALI 1923-2-173, 80–81.

43. RGALI 1923-2-173, 82.

44. Relevant readings of this murder scene, as published from Montagu's documents, are in Merck, *Hollywood's American Tragedies*; Cohen, "Eisenstein's Subversive Adaptation"; and Hussman, "Squandered Possibilities."

45. Eizenshtein, *Metod*, vol. 1, 409 (Eisenstein, *Primal Phenomenon*, 193).

46. In his discussion of the "Dostoevskyism" of his adaptation, its metonymic sliding between thought and action, Eisenstein also cites Honoré de Balzac's 1831 story "The Red Inn" ("L'auberge rouge"). In Balzac's work, a young surgeon, Prosper Magnan, plans to commit a murder and theft but, in the event, does not. When the intended murder is carried out by another character, Balzac's surgeon is debilitated by the guilt he feels for his abandoned intention, and he, like Clyde, is unable to defend himself from the accusation of murder when he is questioned.

47. RGALI 1923-2-1-173, 129–30.

48. Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 2, 75 (Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 233).

49. Eizenshtein, *Metod*, vol. 1, 409 (Eisenstein, *Primal Phenomenon*, 193).

50. RGALI 1923-2-175, 1, 4. Eisenstein notes that he wants this quick repetitive alternation between images and sounds to be "like the train at the end of *Bed and Sofa*," Abram Room's 1927 film, which ends with repetitive successions of shots of the heroine definitively departing Moscow and entering a new mental and emotional reality. Images of her on a swiftly moving train are intercut regularly with shots of each of her two lovers, whom she is leaving behind.

51. RGALI 1923-2-175, 1, 4. Compare this with Eisenstein's later statement of 1943, "I suspect that it may not be that [the interior monologue as a structure of sensual thinking] is possible exclusively in works of cinema, but just that in them it is most complete, most vivid, and most sufficiently accessible" (Eizenshtein, *Metod*, vol. 1, 123).

52. Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 2, 78 (Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 235).

53. Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 2, 77 (Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 234). O'Neill's 1928 Pulitzer Prize–winning play is constructed of stream-of-consciousness soliloquies delivered by actors in frequent disruptions of their onstage actions.

54. The terminology Eisenstein uses to describe the camera's sliding movement into Clyde's interiority (*apparat skol'znul 'vovnutr" Klaida*) pivots on the same word he employs some paragraphs later to describe the interior monologue's "sliding" (*skol'zhenie*) between the objective and subjective domains (Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 2, 77; Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 235).

55. RGALI 1923-2-1-173, 79–80.

56. RGALI 1923-2-1-173, 80. The interior monologue, framed here as a multiplicity of voices (along with what we have seen of the "Dostoevskyism" present in the film's adaptation), suggests a parallel between Eisenstein's dialectical vision of inner speech and the polyphonic conception of dialogical voice and consciousness that Mikhail Bakhtin proposes and demonstrates Dostoevsky's prose (Bakhtin, *Problems of Dostoevsky's Poetics*, 5–46).

57. RGALI 1923-2-1-173, 80. The rippling and whispering voices appear on pages 80–84 of the script.

58. RGALI 1923-2-1-173, 73.

59. Dreiser, *American Tragedy*, 501.

60. Vygotsky, *Thought and Language*, 311.

61. A crucial relationship exists, as some have argued, between Eisenstein's theory of primal or sensual thinking and his imagination of the interior monologue. In Anne Nesbet's *Savage Junctures*, a particularly valuable resource on Eisenstein and sensual thinking, the author briefly discusses the task of making "psychological interiorities into things of the exterior" in *An American Tragedy* (Nesbet, *Savage Junctures*, 128–29).

62. "A static between a powerful compulsion to do and yet not to do . . . the balanced immobility of the mood more and more ominous, yet in truth not suggesting a brutal, courageous power to destroy, but the imminence of trance or spasm" (Dreiser, *American Tragedy*, 530).

63. Of Dreiser's version of Clyde killing Roberta, in which the camera delivers the blow that more or less spells Roberta's doom, Philip Fisher writes, "His is the first murder in literature in which the weapon is a camera" (Fisher, "The Life History of Objects," 137). In Eisenstein's version, the camera is a metonymic tool, reinforcing the fact that all communication between Clyde

and Roberta at this crucial moment is visual—it reifies Roberta's lack of access to Clyde's thoughts, the absence of the soundtrack for her.

64. RGALI 1923-2-1-173, 81.

65. Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 2, 70 (Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 228).

66. In his work on relativism and modernism, Ernst Bloch even refers, not approvingly, to montage as "the key" to Joyce's technique (Bloch, *Heritage of Our Times*, 205).

67. Although Eisenstein conformed to party expectations in the 1930s by coming to gently criticize Joyce's lack of sociopolitical engagement, his concession is clearly at odds with the frequent recurrence of Zola and Joyce as vital figures on his aesthetic map. Their relevance to the director indicates how, especially in the 1930s, he was precariously out of step with the prevailing values of Soviet art and ideology. During the 1934 First Congress of Soviet Writers, both Zola and Joyce were held up as examples of foreign writers who ought not to be considered models (either in terms of form or in terms of content) for the production of socialist realism in literature. In their speeches to the congress, both Nikolai Bukharin and Vladimir Kirshon referred to Zola and his naturalism as of no use to Soviet writers, and, famously, Karl Radek delivered an unexpectedly avant-garde characterization of Joyce as "A heap of dung, teeming with worms, photographed by a movie camera through a microscope" (See Bukharin, "Doklad N. I. Bukharina o poezii, poetike i zadachakh poeticheskogo tvorchestva v SSSR," and Kirshon, "Za sotsialisticheskii realism v dramaturgii!" The quotation from Radek is in Radek, "Sovremennaia mirovaia literatura i zadachi proletarskogo iskusstva," 315.)

68. Eizenshtein, *Metod*, vol. 1, 116.

69. Montagu, *With Eisenstein in Hollywood*, 108.

70. According to Moussinac, it was Eisenstein's understanding that "After a movie at Paramount (to be completed in about six months), our team will return to Moscow to do Sovkino's next production. After which we shall return to Hollywood for a second film. We foresee a third and a fourth film under the same conditions; our team will travel back and forth between the U.S.S.R. and America" (Moussinac, *Sergei Eisenstein*, 47–48). Although this did not turn out to be the case, the expectation that it might be so would certainly have influenced the Eisenstein group's approach to both the form and content of their work in America.

Part III. Sequence/Simultaneity

1. For examples of such accusations, see Geduld and Gottesman, *Sergei Eisenstein and Upton Sinclair*, 285, 333, 364.

2. In a vital study of Eisenstein's oeuvre for the January 1968 issue of Soviet film journal *Iskusstvo kino*, film scholar Leonid Kozlov characterizes *¡Que viva México!* in this way (Kozlov, "K istorii odnoi idei," 70).

3. Salazkina, *In Excess*, 1.

4. Eizenshtein, *Metod*, vol. 1, 233.

5. "Mexico occupies a unique place. It was the 'final word' in the whole cinematographic world of our biography. Along all its lines. Mexico is completely unique" (Eizenshtein, "K predisloviu," 7).

6. Eizensthein, *Metod*, vol. 1, 234. This observation echoes nearly verbatim his 1933 description of Mexico as a "grandiose projection from within . . . of all that one could refer to as my individuality" (Eizenshtein, "K predisloviu," 7).

7. Eizenshtein, *Metod*, vol. 1, 249.

8. Eisenstein [A.16], 2. MoMA Archives, New York.

9. Eisenstein [A.16], 1. MoMA Archives, New York.

10. Eisenstein [A.16], 1–2. MoMA Archives, New York.

11. Michelson, "Reading Eisenstein Reading *Ulysses*," 74.

12. This quotation is from the analysis of *Ulysses* in Edmund Wilson's *Axel's Castle*. In his copy of Wilson's work, Eisenstein highlights and comments on the passage with reference to the distensions of time he had personally performed in *October*. Michelson has transcribed and published these marginalia in her essay (Wilson, *Axel's Castle*, 210).

13. RGALI 1923–2–796, 8–9.

14. Though much of this work remained unpublished at the time of Eisenstein's death, the ideas would have a culmination in the cycle of articles collectively titled "Vertical Montage," published in *Iskusstvo kino* between September 1940 and January 1941.

15. Eizenshtein, *Montazh*, 370.

16. Eizenshtein, *Montazh*, 360. In this section, "Simultaneity and Sequentiality in Perception and in Composition," Eisenstein analyzes the aesthetic position of the French "L'Abbaye" group of poets and their aspiration to write poetry of "simultaneity." Eisenstein does not mention, though making the connection is compelling, the closeness of this group to the work of Guillaume Apollinaire and artists Robert and Sonia Delauney and, in particular, the latter's collaboration with Blaise Cendrars on the artbook publication of *La prose du transsibérien et de la petite Jehanne de France*, which claims on its cover to be "the first simultaneous book."

17. Salazkina, *In Excess*, 36 and 52.

18. For "'Left-Wing' Childishness and the Petty Bourgeois Mentality," see Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 36, 283–314, and Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 27, 323–54. For "The Tax in Kind (The Significance of the New Policy and Its Conditions)," see Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, vol. 43, 205–45 and Lenin, *Collected Works*, vol. 32, 329–65. Kleiman and Kozlov have suggested that this engagement with Lenin was the intention behind Eisenstein's concept for *The General Line* in their introductory essay to the 1973 publication of Eisenstein's notes for *Capital* (Kleiman and Kozlov, introduction to "S. M. Eizenshtein, *Iz neosushchestvlennykh zamyslov*," 56).

19. Eizenshtein, "Piat' epokh, 120. This essay was republished in the 2008–9 issue of *Kinovedcheskiie zapiski* with an extensive foreword written by Naum Kleiman, in which Kleiman highlights the connection with Lenin's materialist schema of Russia's five periods of socioeconomic history. See also Antonio Somaini, who describes the extension of Eisenstein's montage theory to processes of history and historiography as "a tool for disassembling and reassembling the flow of historical phenomena in order to produce connections, sequences, and constellations capable of revealing morphological analogies between apparently heterogeneous forms that are distant from one another in time and space" (Somaini, "Cinema as 'Dynamic Mummification,'" 19–105, 21).

20. RGALI 1923–2–1139, 21–22.

21. Eisenstein and Alexandrov, letter of 20 May 1932, quoted in Zabrodin, *Eizenshtein*, 252.

22. For more on this early Shumiatsky period, see Taylor, "A 'Cinema for the Millions'"; and Belodubrovskaya, *Not According to Plan*. Taylor's article is an early overview of these administrative movements, and Belodubrovskaya's book thoroughly documents the plans and failures of the Soviet film industry of this time, as well as Shumiatsky's institutional legacy.

23. See Shumiatsky's chapter in *Kinematografiia millionov*, "The Struggle for New Film Genres." See also Taylor, "A 'Cinema for the Millions,'" 453–54, and Belodubrovskaya, *Not According to Plan*, 54, 66.

24. To this end, see, for example, his statement to a French journalist in 1930 that "In our country, in the USSR, every stage of cultural development must have the film forms that correspond to it and that are intelligible to it" (Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 1, 556; Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 201).

6. *MMM*

1. Seton, *Eisenstein*, gives more attention to *MMM* than Eisenstein's other early biographers do, mentioning it in several places, with some half-correct and other fully inaccurate details. Other brief references appear in Leyda and Voynow's *Eisenstein at Work* and in work by Barna (*Eisenstein*); Swallow (*Eisenstein)*; and, more recently, Bulgakowa (*Sergei Eisenstein: A Biography*); Bergan (*Sergei Eisenstein*); O'Mahony (*Sergei Eisenstein [Critical Lives]*); and Nesbet (*Savage Junctures*). Nesbet's *Savage Junctures* provides a pithy summation of the film's premise, "the return to modern Moscow—under the guise of tourism—of a set of Boyars from long, long ago" as well as the source of the film's dramatic tension that "in Moscow there [is] a sense of contamination and peril as one era penetrate[s] into another" (Nesbet, *Savage Junctures*, 170). Clark addresses *MMM* in the context of his *Moscow* project (see chapter 7 in this volume).

2. Vishnevsky's assessment of the project's failures is in his 1939 apologia, *Eizenshtein* (1939), 19. Shklovsky's mention of the unmade film comes in his 1973 biography of the director, Shklovsky, *Eizenshtein*, 206.

3. Iurenev, *Sergei Eizenshtein*, vol. 2, 64, 67.

4. Kozintsev is concerned with the comedic in Eisenstein's theory and his practice, but the emphasis of the essay falls much more heavily on the former—namely, its development in Eisenstein's *Method* and *Nonindifferent Nature*. In briefly investigating Eisenstein's practical implementations of the comedic, however, he touches on the attempt in *MMM* to synthesize the political and the atavistic through comedy but concludes that the sensual, comedic aspect "drowns under the weight of intellectualism" (Kozintsev, "Evolutsionnoe begstvo," 437).

5. This edition of *MMM* was printed under the editorial supervision of Vladimir Zabrodin in *Iz istorii kino. Dokumenty i materialy*, 10. See Yutkevich's essay in Iutkevich.

6. Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 3, 69. (Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 5, 80–81).

7. The holdings in the Russian State Archive of Literature and Art that relate to the *MMM* project may be found in two primary locations in the Eisenstein file, 1923-1-343–56 and 1923-2-163, 178–90.

8. Emblematic early examples are the essay, cowritten with Yutkevich, positing Charlie Chaplin's relevance for "The Eighth Art" (1922) or his unpublished 1925 script, cowritten with Aleksandrov, *Bazaar of Lust* (RGALI 1923-1-909). Aleksandrov's recently published diaries provide a sense that comedic film and the dearth of it in the Soviet Union had been a concern for Eisenstein and his protégé since the late 1920s (Alexandrov and Orlova, *Vnukovskii arkhiv*, vol. 3, 172); they also help to demonstrate the remarkable difference in the way the two filmmakers would respond to the dilemma in their own subsequent projects.

9. Viacheslav V. Ivanov has provided valuable analysis of Eisenstein's engagement with this issue throughout his "Estetika Eizenshteina" (Ivanov, *Izbrannye trudy po semiotike i istorii kul'tury*, vol. 1, 142–374), as have Kozintsev ("Evolutsionnoe begstvo," 2012)) and Luka Arsenjuk, in the final section of his recent study (Arsenjuk, *Movement, Action, Image, Montage*, 167–203).

10. Of course, Soviet directors had produced a large number of well-known silent comedies, satirical and otherwise, in the 1920s. Lev Kuleshov's *Extraordinary Adventures of Mr. West in the Land of the Bolsheviks* (1924), Kozintsev and Trauberg's *Adventures of Oktiabrina* (1924), Iakov Protazanov's *Case of the Three Million* (1926), Boris Barnet's *Girl with a Hatbox* (1927), Sergei Komarov's *Kiss from Mary Pickford* (1927) are prominent examples of this multitude, but such films fell far short of satisfying all observers. Viktor Shklovsky's withering assessment of the situation from his 1928 *Hamburg Score* demonstrates this: "No one has succeeded in making a Soviet comedy. I cannot imagine when anyone will" (Shklovsky, *Gamburgskii shchet*, 152–53). Denise Youngblood provides a thorough background of this context in "We Don't Know What to Laugh At," 36–47.

11. Leyda reports that Alexandrov accepted Shumiatsky's proposal to direct *Jolly Fellows*, presumably without the knowledge that Eisenstein had already declined the project—and that Alexandrov did not consult Eisenstein on the matter (Leyda, *Kino*, 305).

12. Eisenstein's view of his contemporaries' approach can be discerned in his assessment of *Jolly Fellows*, which he is reputed to have characterized as "revue-lutionary" (*reviulitsionnyi*) and not "revolutionary" (Salys, *Musical Comedy Films*, 72).

13. Eizenshtein, "Samoe zabavnoe," 3.

14. It was on Eisenstein's advice and recommendation that Shtraukh applied to join the acting company of the Meyerhold Theatre, the almost immediate result of which was Shtraukh's casting in these two historically significant roles (Shakhov, *Maksim Maksimovich Shtraukh*, 57–58).

15. After a successful performance as Lenin in a 1937 production of A. E. Korneichuk's *Pravda* at the Theatre of the Revolution, Shtraukh was cast as Lenin in Kozintsev and Trauberg's *Vyborg Side* (1938). This was followed by reprises of the role in four films by Sergei Yutkevich: *The Man with the Gun* (1938),

Yakov Sverdlov (1940), *Stories of Lenin* (1957), and *Lenin in Poland* (1965), as well as in Aleksandr Zarkhi's *His Name Is Sukhe-Bator* (1942).

16. Shtraukh, "Eizenshtein—kakim on byl," 42–43. See also Shakhov, *Maksim Maksimovich Shtraukh*, 29–30.

17. Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 5, 391–92.

18. Bulgakowa, *Sergei Eisenstein: A Biography*, 18. Eisenstein remained in the apartment with Shtraukh throughout Maxim's courtship of Iudif' Glizer and then simply moved into the neighboring room after the couple were married, maintaining the while a shared household with the couple (see Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 5, 367).

19. In the notes for this project, the central character is sometimes referred to as MM (a clear reference to Maxim Maximovich Shtraukh) and sometimes as HAP. In at least one place, the planned film is referred to as *Khapman*. In his notes, Eisenstein alternates between writing HAP's name in Latin and writing it in Cyrillic letters ["ХАП"]. The name's selection seems to come from its phonic burst of energy and vague semantics: in Russian, not only is it close to the NEP era it satirizes, it also is a sound that might accompany a giant leap. In English, it suggests randomness, readiness, the right place at the right time. That Shtraukh's initials, "MM," begin to overtake the name of the character and, indeed, the title of the piece itself seems emblematic of his close involvement in Eisenstein's development of the piece—the two worked on the project at spare moments in the living quarters that they shared.

20. RGALI 1923-2-163, 15.

21. RGALI 1923-2-163, 12.

22. Shtraukh, "Eizenshtein—kakim on byl," 68–69. Shtraukh had gone to spend the summer in Baku to act in Abram Room's *The Ghost That Never Returns*. Room liked the beard; the Sovkino producers in Moscow who had received test shots of Shtraukh did not. They insisted that the beard come off, and, in the end, it did.

23. RGALI, 1923-1-356. The books included are Zhatkin, ed., *Malye formy dramaturgii*, and Kastoradze, ed., *Estrada*.

24. RGALI 1923-1-356, 2–3.

25. In 1947, Eisenstein would write that *MMM* was a punning and ironic "boyar detective" and that *Ivan the Terrible* was a "boyar detective" taken seriously (Eizenshtein, "Pushkin i Gogol'," 213.)

26. RGALI 1923-1-345, RGALI 1923-2-180, 181. These are also the versions on which Zabrodin relied when making his 1977 publication of the script. RGALI 1923-1-346, dated simply "1933," may be the most authoritative. I use it for the majority of my analysis.

27. Earlier versions of the script cast Maxim as a "professor of barbering sciences and arts" at the "Educational-Industrial Barbershop of the Bathhouse and Laundry Trust" (RGALI 1923-1-344, 3–4). The eventual shift for Maxim to become the director of the Intourist office is less flamboyant though still ideologically operative.

28. RGALI 1923-1-346, 7.

29. RGALI 1923-2-179, 3. Eisenstein consistently uses the term *drevnii rus'* (ancient Rus') to refer equally to features of what most historians would consider Kievan Rus' and those of medieval or Muscovite Russia.

30. The allusions to nineteenth-century Russian literature are even more direct in drafts of the literary script in which the prologue is subtitled "Don't Sit in Someone Else's Sleigh" ("Ne v svoi sani ne sadis' "), a reference of Alexander Ostrovsky's 1852 play of that name.

31. Moscow's Cathedral of Christ the Savior had been demolished to make room for the Palace of the Soviets on 5 December 1931, just a few months before Eisenstein wrote this scene.

32. RGALI 1923-1-346, 2.

33. A note Eisenstein made for himself in early 1933 demonstrates the extent to which the verse of the screenplay was meant to literally carry the conflict between the film's two primary eras: "Verses: Slavicize the Sov[iet]-jargon and Sov-jargonify the Slavic terms" (RGALI 1923-2-188, 95).

34. Bulgakowa, *Sergei Eisenstein: A Biography*, 151.

35. RGALI 1923-1-345, 8.

36. RGALI 1923-1-346, 5.

37. Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 2, 297–98 (Eisenstein, *SW*, vol. 1, 134–35).

38. RGALI 1923-1-346, 5.

39. RGALI 1923-1-346, 5.

40. RGALI 1923-2-180, 1.

41. RGALI 1923-2-182, 7.

42. RGALI, 1923-2-179, 9.

43. Eisenstein can be found in the cast list of RGALI script documents 1923-2-180–81 and 1923-1-344–46.

44. RGALI 1923-1-346, 46–47.

45. RGALI, 1923-2-183, 11.

46. RGALI 1923-1-346, 68–69.

47. RGALI 1923-1-346, 69.

48. RGALI 1923-2-183, 23.

49. RGALI 1923-2-185, 91–92.

50. Suggesting somewhat of a bridge between these tragic and farcical versions of the interior monologue, Anne Nesbet argues that *¡Que viva México!* may have represented this technique's evolution—with the author's own interior monologue in Mexico being presented as "a kind of flat screen onto which his 'innermost' could be projected" (Nesbet, *Savage* Junctures, 129). In *MMM*, this innermost seems to have become both projection *and* screen.

51. RGALI 1923-1-346, 8. Eisenstein employs the trope of obscuring the printed name of a town or person with either an *N.* or an *NN.*—derived from the Latin *nomen nescio* ["I do not know the name"]—thereby facetiously connecting his text to major traditions of Russian literature (works by Pushkin, Dostoevskii, Chekhov, et cetera). With this *N. or NN.*, he forces a narrative entity to fade into a purely alphabetical signifier, like the film itself and its title character, *MMM*.

52. RGALI 1923-2-184, 2, verso; RGALI 1923-2-189, 26.

53. RGALI 1923-2-184, 2–3.

54. RGALI 1923-2-185, 4.

55. RGALI 1923-2-188, 101; RGALI 1923-2-185, 39; RGALI 1923-2-188, 32.

56. RGALI 1923-2-189, 4.

57. RGALI 1923-2-185, 86; RGALI 1923-2-189, 11.
58. RGALI 1923-2-189, 5–6.
59. RGALI 1923-2-185, 101.
60. Eisenstein, *Disney*, 15.
61. Eisenstein, *Disney*, 38.
62. Eisenstein, *Disney*, 32.
63. For more on the relationship between dynamic form, pathos, and the regressive nature of animation in Eisenstein and Disney, see Mikhail Iampolskii's essay "Organicheskaia mashina' u Eizenshteina i Disneia" (1997).
64. Eizenshtein, *Metod*, 1, 426. This formulation of the comedic should be compared with Eisenstein's treatment of the topic in the chapter "Kangaroo" in *Nonindifferent Nature*, in which the literalization of pathos is made graphically clear as "going out of oneself" (Eizenshtein, *Neravnodushnaia priroda*, 2, 257–89).
65. RGALI 1923-2-182, 9.
66. RGALI 1923-2-189, 30. The extent to which Eisenstein seems to *know* Maxim may also perhaps be illuminated by a diary entry of late 1932, focused on childhood reminiscences. In it, the director sketches the typical face of MMM (glasses, beard, hair) and writes "Father: sort of like MM, only *très drôle*!" (RGALI 1923-2-1144, 24).
67. See Eizenshtein, *Metod*, vol. 1, 264, and Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, 79–80. Luka Arsenjuk aptly designates this conception of movement and its appearance in the aesthetic thought of both Engels and Eisenstein as a "Heraclitian vision" (Arsenjuk, *Movement, Action, Image, Montage*, 27–28). Eisenstein's application of mutable form in the *MMM* drawings attest to the basic premise, suggested throughout the director's theoretical writings, that art is a material phenomenon in a constant state of "coming into being."
68. Eisenstein, *Disney*, 15.
69. RGALI 1923-1-346, 79.
70. RGALI 1923-2-189, 14.
71. RGALI 1923-2-186, 11.
72. Iurenev, *Sergei Eizenshtein*, vol. 2, 67. One oblique note in Eisenstein's diary of September 1933 seems to support this: writing about the project already in the past tense, he asks, "on the commission side it was fully approved, but was not approved on the production side . . . so *if* they indeed blocked it, and considered it drivel, then *why* did they accept it and pay money for it in the first place!?" (RGALI 1923-2-1147, 51–52).
73. Though it is clear that Eisenstein was motivated to immerse himself in his next project, *Moscow*, it is not clear why he so abruptly abandoned *MMM*. Some anecdotal accounts suggest that Eisenstein had realized the potential danger of making the film. Naum Kleiman reports that in the 1960s, Pera Atasheva, Eisenstein's widow and secretary, professed that in 1933 her late husband sent a copy of the script to his friend, the journalist Mikhail Koltsov—whose work with the NKVD had acquainted him with the most potent organs of Soviet power. Apparently, after reading *MMM*, Koltsov's response was to question Eisenstein's sanity and strongly urge him to move on to something else, immediately (Naum Kleiman, interview by author, Moscow, 16 June 2017).

7. Moscow

1. The thematization of Moscow's rebirth as the Soviet capital, and its institution as a model city for the nation and for the entire socialist world can be traced to a speech on the development of Soviet cities delivered by Lazar Kaganovich on 15 June 1931 at a plenary session of the Central Committee of the CPSU. The speech, "For the Socialist Reconstruction of Moscow and the Cities of the USSR," focused heavily on Moscow's urban transformation, initiated huge construction projects (such as the Moscow Metro), and provided a slogan ("We shall turn Moscow into a model communist city") that would appear on banners, posters, and newspapers throughout the decade and beyond. Eisenstein's notebooks from the period during which he worked on his *Moscow* project include at least one excerpt from Kaganovich's speech (RGALI 1923-1-360, 4^{v}). Some artists engaged with Kaganovich's speech directly in their work; for example, the designer Varvara Stepanova's photobook, *From Merchant Moscow to Socialist Moscow*, which paired contrasting images of old and new Moscow with long passages from Kaganovich's speech (Stepanova, *Ot Moskvy kupecheskoi*).

2. Elsewhere, most notably in Katerina Clark's groundbreaking 2006 article on Eisenstein and his Moscow projects, this essay has been translated into English as "Moscow over Time." In my work, however, I will insist on treating the preposition *vo* in its most straightforward, locative sense, to place the emphasis on the city situated within time, rather than merely developing through it—thus, "Moscow in Time." Indeed, in her later treatment of the Eisenstein project, Clark alters her translation and also refers to the project as *Moscow in Time* (Clark, *Moscow*, 83, 96.)

3. Eizenshtein, "Moskva vo vremeni," 3. See also Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 1, 154–58. The original text, attributed to Philotheus in an epistle of the 1520s to Grand Prince Vasilii III, reads "dva ubo Rima padoshi, a tertii stoit, a chetvertome ne byti" (Likhachev, D. S., L. A. Dmitriev, A. A. Alekseev, and N. V. Ponyrko, eds. *Biblioteka literaturoi drevnei rusi*, vol. 9, 298) and likely draws its conceptual rhetoric from the dream of Nebuchadnezzar and its interpretation in Daniel 2:37–40.

4. For more on Philotheus, his pronouncement, and its incorporation into rhetoric about Soviet Moscow, see Clark, *Moscow*, especially 1–3.

5. Eisenstein's archive is full of newspaper clippings from articles with titles like "Moscow in Construction" ("Moskva na stroike") detailing various achievements (such as the construction of the metro) in the building of the new Moscow (RGALI 1923-1-361).

6. In the original article, as published in *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, Eisenstein presents this idea through an excerpting of Stalin's February 1931 speech "On the Tasks of Managers"—in which Stalin paraphrases Lenin's call to "overtake and outstrip" (*dognat' i peregnat'*) industrial production in capitalist countries in order to call for an increase in industrial tempo and condemn Russia's historical "backwardness" (Stalin, *Sochinenia*, vol. 13, 29–42). This portion referencing Stalin was left out of the article's subsequent publication in Eisenstein's collected works.

7. See Marx, *Kapital*, 1872, 614–15, where the phrase is elided; see also Marx, *Kapital*, 1932, 574, where the quotation appears as "it is written into the chronicles of humanity with the blazing language of the sword and of fire" ("Ona vpisana v letopisi chelovechestva plameneiushchim iazykom mecha i ognia").

8. Marx, *Das Kapital*, 643.

9. Marx, *Capital*, translated by Samuel Moore and Edward Aveling, vol. 2, 738.

10. Eizenshtein, *Metod*, vol. 1, 317; Eisenstein, *The Primal Phenomenon: Art*, 59.

11. RGALI 1923-2-191, 18.

12. RGALI 1923-2-191, 8, 15. Here the director emphasizes that in such shifts (in this case between 1905 and 1917), "It is not the fact [of the shift], but the meaning of it."

13. Eizenshtein, "Moskva vo vremeni."

14. RGALI 1923-1-359, 20. Here Eisenstein notes the principal similarity of this proliferation of identical faces to the comic version of them in the multiple versions of Maxim Maximovich in his previous project, *MMM*.

15. In a note of February 1934, Eisenstein designates *Moscow* as a *sverkhbiografiia* or superbiography (RGALI 1923-1-359, 26).

16. Naum Kleiman discusses this arrangement in "Eizenshtein, 'Bezhin Lug,'" 136.

17. I thank Joan Neuberger for prompting me toward the possibility of this combination.

18. Eizenshtein, "Moskva vo vremeni."

19. In this emphasis on fully drawn human characters in Shakespeare one may easily see an evolution of the "living person" paradigm prominent in debates within the Russian Association of Proletarian Writers (RAPP) in the late 1920s (Ermolaev, *Soviet Literary Theories,* 60–69).

20. Marx, "Karl Marx an Ferdinand Lassalle," 390–91.

21. Fadeev, *Sobranie sochinenie*, vol. 7, 68–77.

22. Fadeev's article appeared in an abridged version as "Doloi Shillera!," in *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, no. 28 for 1929 and in its full form, also as "Doloi Shillera!," in *Na literaturnom postu*, no. 21–22 for 1929. One is perhaps not surprised to see that Fadeev's articles were answered polemically in subsequent essays such as Daniil Petrovskii's very direct "Za Shillera!" which appeared in *Literaturnaia Gazeta* no. 33 for 1929.

23. Lukacs, "Marks i Engels v polemike," 63.

24. Aksenov, Ivan Sergei Dinamov, Aleksei Gvozdev, Vladimir Miuller, and Anatolii Lunacharskii, "Shekspir," 205. The Shakespeare entry in the BSE has six sections; the fourth is subtitled "General Characteristics of Shakespeare's Persona and Work," written by Lunacharsky. Other sections, notably, were written by Ivan Aksenov and by Sergei Dinamov, whose names appears elsewhere in this chapter.

25. Timofeev, "Obraz," 178.

26. Dinamov, "Bol'she shekspirizirovat'!," 2.

27. Aksenov, "Shekspir podlinnyi i Shekspir nedosochinnenyi," 3; and *Sovetskoe iskusstvo*'s twin headlines on the first page of their 8 October 1933 issue (no. 46) "Kakoi Shekspir nam nuzhen," and "Bor'ba za Shekspira." In

November 1935, these discussions would culminate in Moscow at the First Academic-Creative Conference on Shakespeare, highlighted in the 29 November 1935 issue of *Pravda*, the 1 December 1935 issue of *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, and the 1 December 1935 issue of *Sovetskoe iskusstvo*. Katerina Clark refers to some of this material in her demonstration of Soviet Moscow's relation to world literature and world culture (Clark, *Moscow*, 184–85).

28. For a discussion of the elements and their importance to ancient and medieval philosophy, see Russell, *History of Western Philosophy*, 27, 53–55, 144–48, 206–7.

29. RGALI 1923-2-1146, 1.

30. See, for example, U. C. Knoepflmacher, "Humors as Symbolic Nucleus," 497–501.

31. For Eisenstein's recollections of his relationship with Aksenov, see Eizenshtein, *Metod*, vol. 1, 271–72.

32. Apart from the places in his writings where Marx directly addresses Shakespeare's works, much has been made in memoirs by Marx's friends and family members of Shakespeare's influence on Marx's logical and compositional style. Biographers and critics note this too: see Mehring's *Karl Marx* and its many mentions of Shakespeare's importance, as well as Smith's *Shakespeare's Influence on Marx*.

33. Eizenshtein, "Moskva vo vremeni."

34. RGALI 1923-2-191, 20.

35. Clark, "Eisenstein's Two Projects," 190.

36. Clark, "Eisenstein's Two Projects," 197.

37. RGALI 1923-1-359, 24.

38. RGALI 1923-2-191, 13. "Perekhod iz plameni v plamia."

39. RGALI 1923-1-359, 23.

40. Eisenstein, *Disney*, 16.

41. Eisenstein, *Disney*, 17.

42. Eisenstein, *Disney*, 17–18.

43. Eisenstein, *Disney*, 28.

44. Eisenstein, *Disney*, 19.

45. Eisenstein, *Disney*, 20; see original in Gorkii, *Sobraniie sochinenii*, vol. 15, 134–35.

46. Eisenstein, *Disney*, 20–21; Gorkii, *Sobraniie sochinenii*, vol. 15, 159.

47. Eisenstein, *Disney*, 21; Gorkii, *Sobraniie sochinenii*, vol. 15, 159.

48. RGALI 1923-2-191, 10.

49. Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 5, 525.

50. Eisenstein, *Disney*, 25; Eizenshtein, *IP*, vol. 3, 109. See also Eisenstein, *Nonindifferent Nature*, 77; Eizenshtein, *Neravnodushnaia priroda*, 89–90.

51. RGALI 1923-2-191, 11.

52. See director David Maryan's comments in Kenez, *Bezhin lug* (*Bezhin Meadow*), 202–3.

53. Eizenshtein, *Metod*, vol. 1, 318.

54. RGALI 1923-2-191, 3.

55. RGALI 1923-1-359, 18.

56. Eizenshtein, *Metod*, vol. 1, 322.

57. Eizenshtein, "Moskva vo vremeni."

58. "Ot redaktsii" (editorial), *Literaturnaia Gazeta*, 11 July 1933, 3.

59. RGALI 1923-1-361, 12. The information comes from a Mosfilm newspaper clipping in Eisenstein's *Moscow* file. The provenance of the clipping is as yet undetermined. The report describes a variety of films and filmmakers being assigned prominent writers for collaboration on screenplays (others include Ilf and Petrov working with Alexandrov on *Circus*).

60. It is remarkable that, even though Eisenstein abandoned this film, he continued imagining Moscow-based projects. They include the possibility of directing a Natan Zarkhi stage play about simulacra (of the city itself, of its citizens) titled *Moscow the Second* (see RGALI 1923-1-846, 1923-1-847, 1923-1-870, 1923-2-1460, and 1923-2-1633, as well as Vladimir Zabrodin's section on these plans in Zabrodin, *Eizenshtein*, 285–334). There were also plans for a comically gruesome political circus performance, *The Hand of Moscow*, which was to be presented in conjunction with the fifteenth anniversary of the revolution and, at the climax of which, the revolution's greatest weapon—a mechanism called the Hand of Moscow—slaughters the nation's enemies (see RGALI 1923-1-848). And, more than a decade later, in 1945, there was *Moscow 800* that comprised a brief plan to return to the original *Moscow* material, but now in full color, with greater historical complexity and a different relationship with the passage of eras (RGALI 1923-2-215 and 1923-2-216).

Conclusion: The Unrealized Oeuvre

1. The most thorough accounts of *Bezhin Meadow* are in works by Jay Leyda (*Kino*, 1935), Rostislav Iurenev (*Sergei Eizenshtein*, vol. 2, 1988), Peter Kenez ("History of *Bezhin Meadow*," in LaValley and Scherr, *Eisenstein at 100*, Vladimir Zabrodin ("*K istorii postanovki 'Bezhina luga.'*" 242–82, and in volumes that reproduce historical documents, such as Richard Taylor and Ian Christie, *The Film Factory*, and K. M. Anderson, L. V. Maksimenkov, L. P. Kosheleva, and L. A. Rogovaia, comps., *Kremlevskii kinoteatr, 1928–1953*.

2. Zabrodin, "*K istorii postanovki 'Bezhina luga*,'" 242.

3. Rzheshevsky, *Zhizn*, 71.

4. Rzheshevsky, *Zhizn*, 71.

5. Zabrodin,"*K istorii postanovki 'Bezhina luga*,'" 242.

6. *Kino*, 10 February 1935, 4.

7. Zabrodin, "*K istorii postanovki 'Bezhina luga*,'" 244–47. The Mosfilm document, signed by the head of studio Boris Babitsky, clearing *Bezhin Meadow* to begin production, states that the film "should be considered Mosfilm's principal project for the 1935–36 production year."

8. Leyda, *Kino*, 328. Unfortunately, and unlike the archival caution that was usually his custom, Eisenstein did not take care to preserve the majority of these drawings. See also Leyda and Zina Voynow, *Eisenstein at Work*, 87.

9. Zabrodin, "*K istorii postanovki 'Bezhina luga*,'" 248.

10. According to Naum Kleiman, Eisenstein's case of smallpox was the only one in all Moscow at the time (Kleiman, "Eizenshtein, 'Bezhin Lug' (pervyi variant)," 130.

11. Zabrodin, "*K istorii postanovki 'Bezhina luga*,'" 250–52. Zabrodin quotes from a 27 November 1935 memo from the Main Directorate of the Cinema and Photo Industry to the Mosfilm head Boris Babitsky (found in RGALI 1923-1-397, 10–13).

12. GUKF (the Main Directorate of the Cinema and Photo Industry) underwent slight administrative changes in the middle of 1936 and was redesignated as GUK (the Main Directorate of Cinema). For the sake of simplicity here, I continue to refer to the organization by its previous name.

13. RGALI 1923-2-1152, 7.

14. Zabrodin, "*K istorii postanovki 'Bezhina luga*,'" 272–74.

15. K. M. Anderson et al., *Kremlevskii kinoteatr 1928–1953*, 406, 409–10.

16. Boris Shumiatskii, "O fil'me 'Bezhin Lug,'" *Pravda*, 19 March 1937, 3. See also Taylor and Christie, eds., *The Film Factory*, 378–81.

17. Eizenshtein, "Oshibki 'Bezhina Luga," 3. Eisenstein's article was reprinted, along with Shumiatsky's and two critical articles by Ilya Vaisfel'd and E. Veisman, in a stand-alone volume later in 1937. See Sergei Eisenstein, Boris Shumiatski, Il'ia Vaisfel'd, and E. Veisman, *O fil'me "Bezhin Lug" S. Eizenshteina* (Moscow: Ikusstvo, 1937).

18. Reports of some meetings were transcribed and published. For example, the film bulletin *Kino* published condensed proceedings from a Moscow meeting of 19–21 March, led by Shumiatsky and attended by Eisenstein in its 24 March 1937 issue, and a similar report ran in the 11 April 1937 issue of *Kino* detailing a meeting in Kiev.

19. Many of Leyda's photographs were published in Leyda and Voynow, *Eisenstein at Work*, 84–94. Debabov's photographs are held in RGALI and are distributed by major image licensing agencies such as Sputnik Media and Associated Press. Some limited additional set photos from assistant director Mikhail Gomorov and Leyda's VGIK directing classmate Andrei Frolov survive as well. Gomorov's negatives are in RGALI (1923-3-95, 96) and Frolov's prints are held at Moscow's Eisenstein Center in the State Central Museum of Cinema.

20. Kleiman, *Eizenshtein, "Bezhin Lug,"* 126.

21. The stills and their photographic reproductions are in files RGALI 1923-2-78–1923-2-94. Tobak also succeeded in preserving stills from both variants of *Bezhin Meadow* and both exist in a longer edit of the reconstruction, referred to as the "scientific variant." It is stored in Gosfilmofund.

22. Kleiman, *Eizenshtein, "Bezhin Lug,"* 123–24.

23. Maksimenkov, *Sumbur vmesto muzyki*, 248–49.

24. Wollen, "Perhaps . . .," *October* 88 (Spring 1999): 44.

25. Bulgakowa, *Sergei Eisenstein: A Biography*, 176.

26. Aumont, *Montage Eisenstein*, viii.

27. Bulgakowa, "Evolving Eisenstein," 38–51, and Bordwell, "Eisenstein," 13–37.

28. Vassilieva, "Eizenshtein." For Arsenjuk, see, in particular, the introduction to his *Movement, Action, Image*, 1–22, and his distillation of the Eisensteinian unity as a "unity that is not one" (168). For Neuberger, see her discussions of the impossibility of unified subjectivity and the unity of opposites as both

subject matter and diagnosis for Eisenstein in *This Thing of Darkness*, 90–91 and 185–91.

29. Kozlov, "K istorii odnoi idei," 77.
30. Eizenshtein, *Metod*, vol. 1, 226.
31. Eizenshtein, *Metod*, vol. 1, 226.
32. RGALI, 1923-2-979.
33. Kozintsev, "Evolutsionnoe begstvo," 424.
34. Eizenshtein, *Metod*, vol. 1, 317.
35. RGALI 1923-2-796, 8–9. Published in Eizenshtein, *Montazh*, 475.
36. I discuss the *Disney* essay in chapters 6 and 7.
37. Eisenstein, *Disney*, 23.
38. Eisenstein, *Disney*, 28.
39. See the illustration on the frontispiece to Eizenshtein, *Neravnodushnaia priroda*.

Appendix. Eisenstein's Major and Minor Unrealized Works

1. Eizenshtein, "K predisloviu," 6.

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